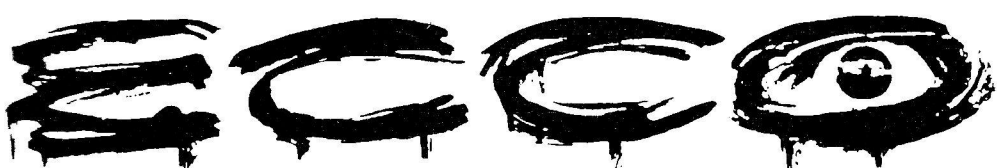
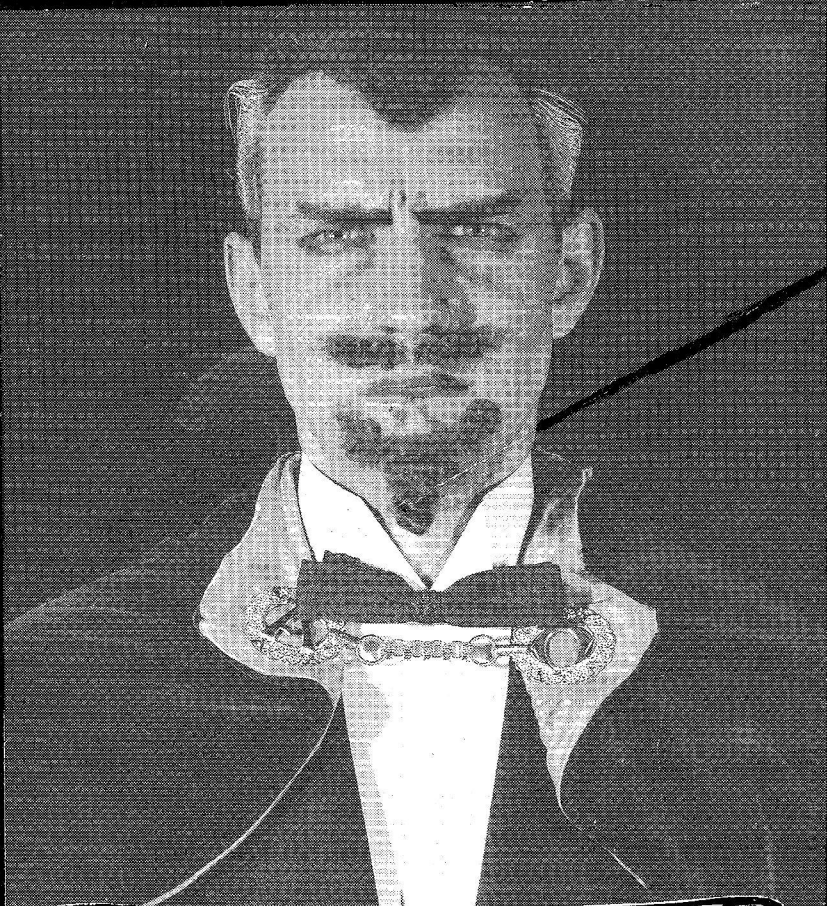


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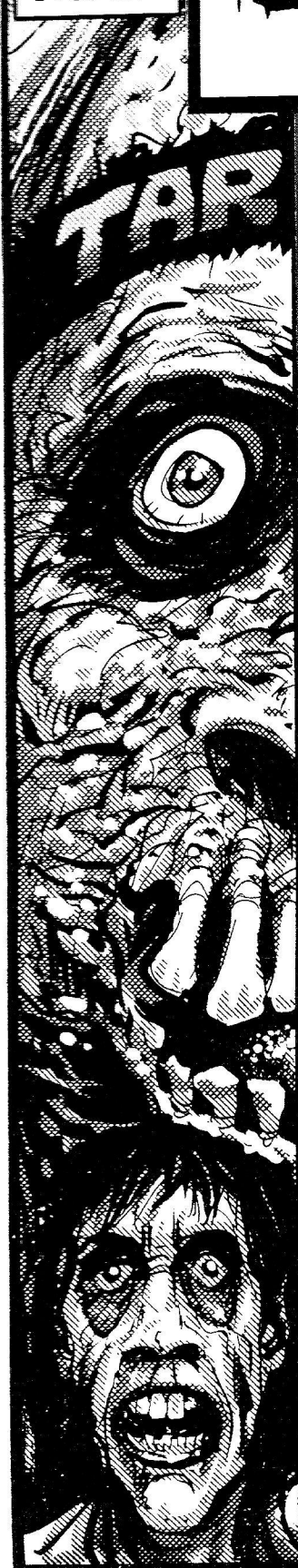


the world of bizarre video



In This Issue:

The Wild World
of
DOUG HOBART



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OLD TOWN

"It's great that it ended up being the artist who determined to censor himself. We will gladly comply with his request to remove the product from our racks."

- Howard Applebaum, vice president of Kemp Mill Music (D.C. area record retailer), on Ice-T's announcement that he had asked his record label to recall copies of his group Body Count's album featuring the controversial song "Cop Killer."

While we're always interested in issues involving freedom of expression here at ECCO, the "Cop Killer" episode has proven to be a tiresome, self-serving plot by both the record label, Warner Brothers, who welcomed the controversy at first because it seemed to promise a surge of popularity for an album with relatively sluggish sales; and by the various groups who denounced the song, calling for a ban in lieu of a boycott of Time Warner. The latter group includes several chapters of the Fraternal Order Of Police (FOP); the National Rifle Association (NRA), who perversely offered a bounty to anyone turning in a real-life cop killer; and by the International Brotherhood Of Police (IBP), who threatened to sue Time Warner whenever a police officer is killed in any city where "Cop Killer" is sold.

I've listened to the Body Count album, and find it perplexing that "Cop Killer" is the only song that has sparked protest. In another song, Ice-T (or at least the character he portrays) carves his own mother into bite-sized chunks of flesh because she disapproves of his white girlfriend. In yet another, he buttfucks the daughter of a Klansman after attending a Klan meeting concealed under one of their sheets. Where are the Advocates of Racist Mothers (ARM) to protect their constituents from such sadistic violence? Why hasn't the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) howled their disapproval over lyrics written especially to make them cringe?

The truth is that the entire episode has less to do with the threat posed by a poorly-selling song than with the ever-increasing power of cultural watchdogs who sup at the trough of the knee-jerk "family values" crowd and support the censorship laws proposed by Vote-Seeking Conservative Politicians (VSCP). With the potential ascendance of Tipper Gore and her Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) to the White House, I find the censors far scarier than a

COVER: The Wild World Of Doug Hobart is interpreted by renowned graphic artist and genre scholar Stephen R. Bissette, who wishes he had a set of Tartu Wacky Teeth to call his own.

song that does, after all, demonstrate the very real animosity between Los Angeles' black community and its often-brutal police force. As a writer who specializes in the coverage of movies, books, and music that would agitate these minions of repression, I note with alarm the outcome of the Ice-T incident. That's why I'm urging my fellow fanzine editors to join my new anti-censorship organization, to be entitled Fanzines Upholding Charles Kilgore's Explicit Movies And Lewd Lyrics, or FUCEMALL for short. I'm working on a logo.

As an eager spectator to the tag-team bout that is the human condition, I've observed with amusement the battle between (in this corner) **Film Threat** editors Chris Gore and David Williams and (in that corner) horror writer Charles Balun. In a column that appeared in **Film Threat Video #4**, Williams blasted Balun for selling unlicensed copies of Jorg Buttgerit's **Nekromantik** and other European horror tapes. Williams, whose employers sell licensed copies of the title in question, blamed Balun and other bootleggers for destroying the chance of independently-produced features to find legal distribution by lowering their demand in the marketplace with grainy dupes. **Film Threat Video** carried their attack further in the following issue by reprinting letters mailed between Balun and **Nekromantik** producer Manfred Jelinski that had been

although I enjoy courtroom drama as much as any Raymond Burr fan, this seems to be the simple case of a couple of guys with too much idle time on their hands.

This issue concludes Stephen R. Bissette's penetrating article on Abel Gance's sound remake of his own silent **J'Accuse**, and features an appreciation of Tony Richardson's overlooked classic of sick humor, **The Loved One**, by resident Anglophile Harold Clarke. **The Weird World Of Doug Hobart** is rounded out with three book reviews, a look at auto safety videos, and a few surprises from the surreal sixties.

For their invaluable help and willing support, ECCO thanks the following co-conspirators: William Grefe, Doug Hobart, Bill Kelley, Don Metz, Jim Murray, Fred Olen Ray, Something Weird Video, Dr. Sam Stetson, and the Video Vault.

Mondo Ohio by Charles Kilgore

Years before **Faces Of Death** brought actual scenes of human carnage to thrill-seeking grindhouse audiences, a series of films produced in the staid state of Ohio revelled in unflinching close-ups of the charred, mangled bodies of accident victims as they were pulled from the twisted wreckage of their automobiles. Unlike

Faces Of Death and other mondo "sick"-tacles, none of the fatalities shown in this series of films were faked. Also unlike **Faces Of Death**, the films were made with the participation of the Ohio State Police, and were widely shown in schools to classrooms packed with grossed-out junior high students. Now thanks to Mutilation Graphics, these ultra-gruesome yet oddly enthralling movie anachronisms are finding new fans and delighting old acquaintances through the wonder of home video. Mutilation is marketing four characteristically revolting half-hour drivers' education films on

two gore-packed tapes. These four films have probably done more for public transportation than any inflated auto insurance rate ever could.

Volume One opens with **Signal 30** (1959), the first and most notorious of the Mansfield, Ohio-lensed drivers' education films, and concludes with **Wheels Of Tragedy** (1963). Whereas the former film actually outlines the formula for its progeny, the latter introduces a variation...a fictitious subplot involving a seasoned state trooper who must ride with a younger, untrained partner. The extended dramatizations leading up to the actual fatality footage in **Wheels Of Tragedy** lend

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forwarded by Jelinski himself. Their smear ended with the suggestion of a **Film Threat** lawsuit against Balun.

I'm sure that Chris Gore paid a handsome sum to **Dick Clark Productions** for the use of the **American Bandstand** clip of Public Image, Ltd. on his **Cathode Fuck** video collection (available directly from **Film Threat**, Dick). I'm equally certain that **Nekromantik 2** would be playing at your local cineplex by now if Charles Balun hadn't wrecked the film's market with his illegal dupes. But that's not all: I also have evidence that Charles Balun is very familiar with a certain grassy knoll in downtown Dallas, and that Chris Gore is none other than the infamous Watergate tattler "Deep Throat" (or was that "Big Mouth?"). And

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Above and below: four scenes from the Ohio-lensed automobile safety films available from Mutilation Graphics.

it a queasy humor, as does the sub-Dragnet narration of the older trooper.

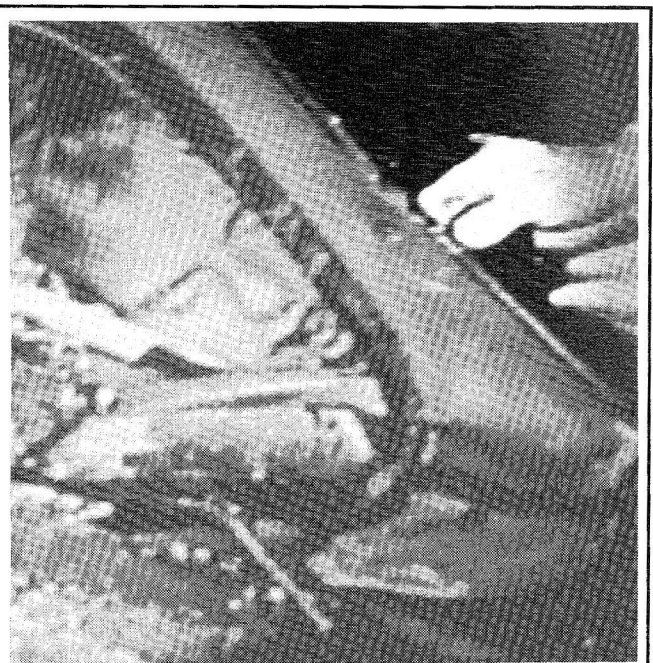
Volume Two's films are even more gruesome. **Highways Of Agony** begins with a disclaimer warning of its unsuitability for those under fourteen years of age. Its ominous tympany music suggests a horror film, a tone that is sustained by Wayne Byers' grim narration. Odd touches of creativity surface: close-up footage of a toy train prefaces a gory collision between a freight train and a carload of teenagers. Its video companion, **Mechanized Death** (1961), sports a horror film's title credit lettering, but its authentic splatter is framed by clumsily staged fiction. For instance, a

drunk driver is apprehended by state patrolmen while comical music (aurally suggesting "drunk") drones in the background. He's not laughing, however, when the judge gives him a jail sentence and a hefty fine...in addition to a year of probation! The snotty narration plus footage of a dying child make **Mechanized Death** one of the more unpleasant of the drivers' education films.

What these films all reveal is an endorsement by law enforcement officials of footage that resembles often-condemned fare of more recent vintage. But for several exceptions, the stomach-churning footage of these Ohio-produced films far surpasses

any recent mondo carbon copy. The accident scenes are frank: surprisingly, victims' charred genitalia are visible in several scenes. Apparently the filmmakers were trying to hit traffic offenders -- typically teenage boys -- where it hurt the most.

Besides their trademark authentic gore, these films all share a more innocent appreciation of law enforcement than can be understood in these post-Rodney King times. This square-jawed approach to the grim tasks of dedicated highway troopers now translates into a sort of cultural camp that also includes the films of Ed Wood, who excelled at the sort of inane





It's Caveman Night at Louie's Limbo Lounge, or so suggests this still from **Nudes On The Rocks**. It's one of the many rare trailers on Something Weird Video's **Twisted Sex** series.

commentary that ties these limited storylines together. Still, the films' graphic footage is not so easily laughed off; some, in fact, is genuinely disturbing, all the more so because you'll be watching for entertainment.

For further information about **Signal 30** and other drivers' education films, send a dollar to Ralph Coon for the great first issue of his mini-magazine **The Last Prom**. Coon traces the history of drivers' education films and interviews several of their makers. It's a great companion piece to the two tapes.

[**Signal 30**, **Wheels Of Tragedy**, **Highways Of Agony**, and **Mechanized Death** are available on two tapes from Mutilation Graphics, 3765 Oriole Court, Shrub Oak, NY 10588 for \$19.95 each postpaid. **The Last Prom** is available from Ralph Coon, 137 S. San Fernando Blvd., Box 243, Burbank, CA 91502.]

No Raincoat Necessary

by Professor Smutt

Last issue ECCO gave a thumbs-up review to **The Laughing, Leering, Lamponing Lures of David F. Friedman**, a hilarious collection of movie trailers from the very vaults of the Mighty Monarch of

Exploitation himself. Lightning may not strike twice, but Something Weird Video has again provided film historians and degenerates alike with rare sexploitation history. After combing garages, warehouses, and abandoned theaters for sin-soaked celluloid treasures, Something Weird has coughed up **Twisted Sex**, five (count 'em! Five!) tapes of vintage "adults only" previews from an era lovingly referred to on the packaging as "the sick, sick sixties."

For many of the trailers included in **Twisted Sex**, "sick" is the operative word. Anti-pornography crusaders who believe - or profess to believe - that contemporary smut is ever-increasingly violent towards women would do well to examine the evidence to the contrary presented here. Rape, murder, torture, flagellation, necrophilia, and other perversities abound, albeit in soft-core depictions that beckon more to the viewer's imagination than today's graphic fare. The sordid atmosphere provided by the cheap sets (often motel rooms) and overall lack of glamour of the flabby, mole-ridden participants will appear to most viewers as raunchier than the comparatively aseptic (and oddly clinical) porn of today.

Yet not all of the trailers in the **Twisted Sex** collection deal in depravity and degradation. Many can be characterized as "nudies," those harmless paeans to the human (well, mostly female) epidermis that

tested community standards in the early sixties. Many of these were actually filmed in nudist colonies, but, because real nudists are plain-looking folks (think of Ed Asner or the late Nancy Kulp), the filmmakers would usually "salt the mines" with nationally-known ecdysiasts such as Blaze Starr and Virginia Bell, or sometimes regional talent hired from agencies. Among the "nudies" on **Twisted Sex** are previews for the films of Barry Mahon, perhaps the sixties' most prolific director of skin flicks. Although astoundingly cheap-looking, the glimpses of Mahon's films provided by these trailers suggest that they were imbued with a rare sense of playfulness.

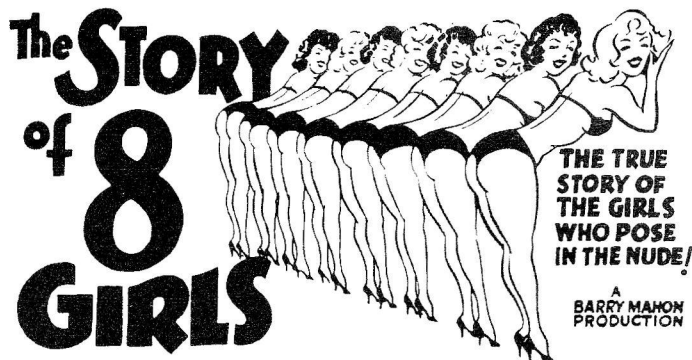
Each volume of **Twisted Sex** contains over forty trailers and featurettes, the majority having never before been released on video...or viewed AT ALL in the last twenty years. Highlights of Volume One include a number of the aforementioned trailers for Barry Mahon's films along with those of such "crotch opera" luminaries as Radley Metzger, Michael and Roberta Findlay, and the underrated Joe Samo. Also included is a silent trailer for **Vapors**, a gay softcore feature from the late exploitation "blunderkind" Andy Milligan (referred to onscreen as "the new leader in underground film making"!). Volumes Two and Three continue with more trailers from the filmmakers above plus rarities by Gary Graver, Joseph P. Mawra (including the

sick sex/gore of Olga's Girls), and William "Adam Film World" Rotsler, to name but three.

Although Volumes Four and Five both feature a handful of trailers (Doris Wishman's films, *The Adventures Of Lucky Pierre*, etc.) available on other collections, rarities abound. Among these are Lila (the X-rated version of *Mantis In Lace*) and other wild offerings from Harry Novak's Boxoffice

International; the aptly titled *Confessions Of A Psycho Cat*; and the go-go featurette *Wild Night At The Interlude*, directed by the inimitable H.G. Lewis. In all, each volume is a treasure-trove of ephemeral erotica that has been rescued from obscurity (not to mention landfills and incinerators) by Something Weird Video.

According to Something Weird head honcho Mike Vraney, the *Twisted Sex* series will resume with the upcoming Volume Six (which he promises will contain all new-to-video rarities). This series singularly illuminates the sexual totems and taboos of an entire generation, and as such should be required viewing for anyone who professes an interest in the sociological ramifications of "sinema" or who simply wants to once again travel those back roads that pass between youthful innocence and the coarse pleasures of adulthood.



[*Twisted Sex* Volumes One through Five are available from Something Weird Video for \$20 each plus postage. Refer to their ad on the inside back cover.]

Deathstyles Of The Rich And Famous by Harold Clarke

In October 1965 *The Loved One* ripped across American cinemas as "a motion picture with something to offend everyone." And offend it did. The conformist American press howled its indignation over the late British film director Tony Richardson's insensitive, depraved, and decidedly Anglo-flavored skewering of death, organized religion, Hollywood, Southern California, over-eating, the military, and other largely unsullied stateside venerables. Brain dead and near-brain dead critics, such as *The New*

York Times' Bosley Crowther, blasted the film for its coarse juxtaposition of death and food, and its irreverence toward the doctrine of the resurrection of the soul. Most of these diatribes, however, reflected more of an inability to overcome the inhibitions of the era rather than any shortcomings on Richardson's part. Now, nearly three decades later, even mainstream critics such as Leonard Maltin embrace

The Loved One as a worthy, if not landmark, example of tastelessness and morbidity.

Based on the Evelyn Waugh novel of the same title, *The Loved One* chronicles the bizarre odyssey of Dennis Barlow (Robert Morse), a tactless, would-be English poet, as he visits his uncle (John Gielgud), an art director for a major studio in Hollywood. After losing his job due to cost-cutting initiatives, Barlow's heartbroken uncle hangs himself. A colony of British performers, writers, and artists then enlists Barlow to arrange a suitable funeral for his uncle at Whispering Glades Memorial Park, filmdom's most select graveyard. Here, Barlow encounters and becomes smitten with Aimee Thanatogenos (Ajanette Comer), a ghoulishly alluring cosmetologist at Whispering Glades. Barlow must compete against Miss Thanatogenos' thoroughly ambivalent and slightly deranged affections for Mr. Joyboy (Rod



Eros and Thanatos from Tony Richardson's *The Loved One*.

Steiger), Whispering Glades' Chief Embalmer. Over time, Thanatogenos grows disenchanted with both suitors: Barlow, because of his employment at "The Happier Hunting Grounds," a pet cemetery, and his penchant for plagiarizing the verses he presents to her; and Joyboy, after a visit to his home during which, among other oddities, she comes face-to-face with Mrs. Joyboy (Ayllene Gibbons), his hideously corpulent mother. This tangled weave of passion ultimately unravels and, in varying degrees, leaves its participants the worse for wear.

By all accounts, bringing *The Loved One* to celluloid was an agonizing, if not acrimonious, endeavor. The script for the film, ultimately prepared by playwright Christopher Isherwood and scenarist Terry Southern, endured at least eight revisions prior to filming. The completed film ran five hours, requiring substantial splicing and dicing.

Under the tutelage of Richardson, however, the potentially unreconciliatory elements of the screenplay coalesce into a fast-paced, uproarious and capably administered whole. Richardson's background research, which consisted of visits to several elite mortuaries in Hollywood to get a "feel of" his subject matter, also comes through in the movie's

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numerous macabre flourishes. Everything from Mr. Joyboy's impious embellishments to the selection of a coffin and funeral attire to the composing of a tribute for Barlow's uncle and much, much more is depicted with detailed, indelicate, and side-splitting malevolence.

A stellar cast substantially enhances the film's twisted appeal. The two leads, Morse and Comer, distinguish themselves with a depraved elegance. These performances, however, are nearly overshadowed by the presence of many major stars. Richardson effectively uses these luminaries to symbolize the characteristics comprising humanity's decadent and despicable nature. Most notable is Jonathan Winters in a sensational dual role as the greedy and treacherous Blessed Reverend Wilbur Glenworthy, the proprietor of Whispering

Glades, and his hard-luck but equally avaricious brother Harry. Others, including Milton Berle, Liberace, Lionel Stander, and Robert Morley, participate in cameo roles that reduce Los Angeles society to a level more repugnant than the most noxious witches' brew.

Never to be forgotten, however, is Mrs. Joyboy. Richardson's depictions of her oedipal-tinted relationship with her son are unpleasant, but her obscene gorging of an entire cooked pig reigns as one of cinema's most stomach-churning spectacles. Never mind exploitation's innumerable gore fests: Mrs. Joyboy's orgasmic chow-down puts those blood orgies on a par with someone quietly munching corn-on-the-cob. Rumor has it that Elizabeth Taylor was briefly considered for the role of Miss Thanatogenos. A more convincing argument, I believe, could be made for casting her as Mrs. Joyboy. The parallels certainly abound -- a bedridden, overfed, self-indulgent shrew.

Many people viewing *The Loved One* typically admire or spurn the film because of, or in spite of, its vulgar hilarity, malicious anti-Americanism, and dark ferocity. But beneath this veneer lurks the overriding theme, essentially missed at the time of its release, that mankind represents



Mr. Joyboy (Rod Steiger) and his beloved mother (Ayllene Gibbons). From *The Loved One*.

little more than a vile and disgusting embodiment of the seven deadly sins. Nearly every frame of the film views the human condition as proud, angry, avaricious, lustful, gluttonous, vain, and envious. No solutions are sought and no answers are provided. Instead, Richardson allows his characters to wallow in their own misery, with the only possible escape coming via a hideous form of self-inflicted sabotage. Consequently, for a production that sets the standard for outrageous degeneracy, **The Loved One** delivers some of the most potent and damning indictments against the 20th century ever presented in modern cinema.

J'ACCUSE: The Passion Of Abel Gance, Part Two
by Stephen R. Bissette

"[Jason] saw the field rising into mounds. It seemed that there were graves all over the field of Ares. Then he saw spears and shields and helmets rising up out of the earth. Then armed warriors sprang up, a fierce battle cry upon their lips.

"Jason remembered the counsel of Medea. He raised a boulder that four men could hardly raise and...he cast it...Right into the middle of the Earth-born Men the stone came. They leaped upon it like hounds, striking at one another as they came together. Shield crashed on shield, spear rang upon spear as they struck at each other. The Earth-born Men, as fast as they arose, went down before the weapons in the hands of their brethren."

- Padraic Colum, **The Golden Fleece and the Heroes Who Lived Before Achilles** (MacMillan, 1921, pg. 129)

Among the features Abel Gance completed in the decade between his masterpiece **Napoleon** (1927) and the remake of **J'Accuse** was **La Fin du Monde** (**The End Of The World**, 1931), an

extravagant self-descriptive science fiction-fantasy completed by Gance with the aid of expressionistic avant garde directors Jean Epstein and Walter Ruttmann.²¹ In a fit of hubris, Gance cast himself as a martyred religious zealot who, assisted by his scientist brother (Victor Francen), tries to save mankind as global catastrophes plunge the populace into despair and wanton behavior. The New World Order preached by Gance's character perhaps embarrassed Gance in later years, foreshadowing as it did the decrees of Adolf Hitler's fascist New World Order: "Humanity must cast aside those who are not born for victory...only the strong shall remain."²²

Six years later, that dialogue had gained terrible consequence as Gance read the ominous currents in contemporary European politics which pointed again to war. The silent **J'Accuse**, whether through premeditated design or opportunistic afterthought, had lashed out against a war that had not reached its conclusion, where "the ultimate question [was] not whether slaughter should have been avoided but whether it [had] served a purpose."²³ The remake would refute such qualifications, intending to rouse its audiences in hopes of completely averting the war Gance feared was to come; like the mythic hero Jason, Gance would cast a conceptual stone into the rallying forces of war, prompting them to turn against one another, destroying themselves rather than all of Europe.

It is unlikely that even as fiery an artist as Gance really believed a single film could do this (note that the remake's climax is pessimistic and inconclusive), but, like Jean Diaz, he had to try. Commercially, artistically, and politically, **J'Accuse's** remake seemed an ideal and important project worthy of Gance's devotion. Filming began in May 1937 (just after the release of Jean Renoir's humanist anti-war classic **Le Grand Illusion**), was completed in August, and Gance delivered his final edit in

December²⁴ as the Fascist movement gained momentum in parts of France and Hitler's Third Reich irrevocably established itself as a power to be reckoned with in Germany.

Gance's achievement is all the more stirring given the context of the period. Though very specific in its references to World War One, its twelve million dead, and Verdun, Gance eschewed any references particular to 1937: the gathering momentum of war hysteria sans political specifics seems timeless, capable of manifesting itself at any time, in any nation. "This film is dedicated to the dead of the war of tomorrow," Gance's opening title proclaimed, "who will no doubt watch it without recognizing in it the face of their own time." It is a dedication as relevant to today's post-Gulf War audience as it was to pre-World War Two viewers, lending it a chilling, reverberating gravity.

The new **J'Accuse** proved more flamboyant, passionate, and apocalyptic than the original, driven by the same breathless urgency, though here its immediacy was anticipatory (even prophetic) of the coming war rather than an assessment of war's wake. Most importantly, its climactic march of the dead was absolutely integral to the narrative, as well as emotional, structure of the film. What was in the silent version a powerful coda was now a proper conclusion to and culmination of the aggressively pacifist theme at the heart of Gance's brilliantly re-orchestrated screenplay.

Gance's central character is again Jean Diaz (Victor Francen), whom we meet fighting in the trenches of Chantonnay during the closing days of World War One. Diaz is a stoically potent, resolute character, quite unlike the original's almost fey poet. To his fellow soldiers, Diaz is "the cleaner of the trenches...keeper of the doves of peace," dialogue spoken as he buries the dove we see bleeding in the opening shot, momentarily cast into fouled fountain



The shattered faces of World War One veterans, members of Les Gueules Cassées (the Organization of Mutilated Veterans of the Last World War), as seen in the conclusion of Abel Gance's 1937 **J'Accuse**.

waters when a bomb blows the head off an inverted statue of Christ until Diaz tenderly retrieves its body. Here, too, is the brutish Francois (Marcel Delaitre), whose rivalry with Diaz for the love of Edith (Line Noro) is established with dialogue and a reconciliatory handshake in the first seven minutes. Francois is hardly the brooding presence of the original: we barely get to know him, his import defined only in terms of Diaz's bond with and obligation to him.

During a lull in the battle, the battalion enjoys the singing of Flo (Sylvie Gance) in the Elephant Bar Cafe as a cannon barrage ravages the village around them. Twelve men are chosen for patrol duty into the Ravine des Dames, including Flo's beloved, young Gilles Tenant (Georges Saillard), and Diaz's friend Francois. Harboring a premonition that none of the patrol will return alive, Diaz does everything possible to postpone the pointless mission. His superior Lt. Henri Chimay (Jean Max) refuses to telephone headquarters in order to do so...though it is within Chimay's power to stop the patrol. Having done all he can, Diaz chooses to join the mission, replacing a soldier who has a family.

Diaz vows to Francois that if he survives, "Edith will never mean anything to me," thus resolving the rivalry that fired the entirety of the silent *J'Accuse*. Diaz (and Gance) have a much greater aspiration: "Never will there be another war," Diaz vows to the entire patrol as they depart, "I swear it!"

During what is indeed their final battle (a sequence incorporating actual trench warfare footage from the silent feature), Francois is mortally wounded. As dawn breaks and the Armistice trumpet sounds proclaiming the end of the war, Gilles dies in the mud of the trenches. The bodies of the dead -- including the still-living but unconscious Diaz -- are counted; Diaz moans and is rescued. He is carried to the hospital, where Francois dies beside him, holding Diaz' hand as he succumbs. The

attendant cannot separate their grip. Diaz alone has survived the fatal mission.

Gance thus compresses the substance of the silent version's melodrama into the remake's first forty-five minutes. Supplanting the 1919 romantic triangle is a stranger triangle of unrequited passion, wherein **denial** of mortal affection confirms Diaz' morbid obsession with the loss of his brothers-in-arms and his promise to them. Diaz returns to tell Edith of Francois' death: in accordance with Francois' last wish, Diaz had continued mailing letters composed by Francois prior to his death and written as if he had survived, saying "things [Francois] could never express while still alive." Edith wishes to live with Diaz, but his vow to Francois prevents this. As he resumes his scientific research work for the Pierrefond glass factory, Edith's daughter Helene (Renee Devillers) grows from a child doting on Diaz as a surrogate father into a woman passionately in love with him as a potential suitor.

Unlike the silent version, in which Diaz seems an incomplete figure sans Francois' more primal nature, Diaz here is an integrated though haunted character. Here the revised romantic tryst is splintered by Diaz' morbid inability to focus his passions on anyone other than his dead brethren. His research shop stands alongside the vast cemetery monument of Verdun, the photographs of his eleven dead companions (note that Gance had lost nine of ten dear friends in World War One) arranged in a crucifix formation on his wall. "They are my family," Diaz tearfully muses over their graves, "how alone you are, how forgotten."

When the glass factory is taken over by none other than Henri Chimay -- the man who condemned Francois and the other patrol members to their deaths through his refusal to stop the mission -- it is converted into a profitable munitions and weapons manufacturer. Diaz is appalled and resigns from his position, abandoning his research. In a potent dialogue, Diaz confronts

Chimay with the consequences of his profiteering. "War is horrible, Chimay concedes, "but we must fight and conquer...France seeks a leader!" "No, we must do another thing," Diaz counters, "we must love...the world seeks a heart." In the very next sequence, Diaz spurns both Edith and Helene's affections once and for all; Diaz professes love for his fellow man, but denies himself and the women who love him any expression or consummation of love. Thus denied, the triangle consumes itself: Helene marries Chimay. Edith lives embittered and alone. Unlike the silent version, in which Diaz' loving but pathetic mother is a key character who has no parallel in the remake, Diaz' only female companion remains Flo, a kindred spirit and survivor who shares Diaz' obsession with the dead, harboring her own lost love for Gilles.

The requirements of characterization and melodrama properly established, Gance's narrative edges into darker terrain. Diaz discovers a map indicating an underground passageway into the vault at the heart of the cemetery, and with shovel in hand he proceeds. Gance does not show the exploration, only its consequences during a furious storm that evening as Diaz stumbles into Flo's home, eyes widened and hair turned white with shock. "No man on earth has ever seen such things..." he mutters, afraid to remain; hearing the voices of the dead, Diaz calls out to them, an evocative chorus implying their reply.

Returning to Edith, Diaz tries to tell her of the experience, only to begin ranting. "War is on the way," he shouts, "I'll prevent it, by God...I alone will stop it!...I will be the one to get up and yell, 'No! It won't happen again!'...I stand up and proclaim the sacred right of life! **I accuse! I accuse!...**" Diaz is driven insane; he becomes violent and is forcibly restrained before lapsing into a catatonic stupor, resigned to Edith's care. Henri appropriates Diaz' research findings, using his invention of a bulletproof 'steel



Above Left: "Fill your eyes with this horror!" **Right:** Jean Diaz (Victor Francen) faces the invasion of the dead, from the apocalyptic conclusion of *J'Accuse*.

glass' to manufacture armor...contrary to Diaz' antiwar designations for the material. In an eerie prelude to the realities of World War Two, Gance punctuates the story with montages of France's mobilization for war (incorporating actual newsreel footage of the time).

Regaining his sanity, Diaz returns to Verdun and enters the graveyard vault. As the monument spire flashes its beacon and the atmosphere becomes thick with clouds, Diaz calls to the twelve million dead: "I have come and I have understood your orders," he says, urging the French, British, and German dead of war to march upon the living. In a somewhat optically crude (incorporating mass hysteria footage borrowed from Gance's *La Fin de Monde*) though brilliantly composed and emotionally rousing sequence, wildlife flees, flowers wilt, and the skies churn as the cemetery crosses vanish and the dead indeed rise and march upon the living, seeking their homes and villages.

In a horrifying extrapolation on the silent version's performance of soldiers-who-were-to-die as the marching dead, the dead here are played in part by members of Les Gueules Cassees, the Organization of Mutilated Veterans of the Last World War. Members of Les Gueules Cassees had been present at the signing of the Versailles Treaty, which Gance claimed brought them to his attention and made their participation central to the remake's impact; ever the showman, Gance was quick to exploit the presence Le Gueules Cassees had brought to Versailles. As the multitude of skeletal masks and spectral makeups give way to glimpses and painful close-ups of men who were disfigured and maimed by the trench wars, their eyes shimmering with the agony of their broken lives, the viewer is plunged from a maelstrom of imaginatively composed cinematic metaphor into an intimate confrontation with the true legacy of warfare. These unforgettable and almost unbearable visages of war lend the apocalyptic tableau an irrefutable validity, plying a terrible (but dignified) verisimilitude with devastating, unflinching moral precision.

The living populace becomes a terrified, scurrying mass. Seizing Diaz, a mob of villagers tie him to a monument in the town square and burn him alive as he implores them to stop the war (the speech that opens Part One of this article). As the dead descend on the mob, his eleven fallen battalion comrades gather and lift the martyred Diaz out of the pyre, enlisting his own passionate spirit in their army as the march continues.

Cinema historian William K. Everson claims that in Gance's "original version (modified somewhat as war was indeed let loose on the world) Diaz' scheme work[ed]: the nations of the world capitulate, agree to a permanent world peace, and the dead return to their graves."²⁵ Everson's claim is

doubtful. Reviews of the period indicate that, when the film opened in Paris, there was no happy ending in sight. However, Everson suggests the recut climax (with no suggestion of world peace or the dead returning to their graves satisfied) characterized only the export versions, arguing that the truncated climax "ended somewhat abruptly...conclud[ing] arbitrarily with...a poignant (under the circumstances) and timeless climax, but no longer a dramatic one, and one that certainly disturbed the rhythm of Gance's film."²⁶ The 'restored' version suggests no such possibility, and indeed the grim final imagery seems essential to the film's tragic power. However dramatically "abrupt" the climax, it hardly seemed (or seems today) "arbitrary;" in fact, what may have indeed been Gance's original ending would only have betrayed and trivialized his urgency and the gravity of his grandiose vision.

Francon's performance as Diaz is the galvanizing focus of the film. Though he "is a man of science and a visionary...his science is powerless...Only the visionary can save the world, but it is by instilling fear,"²⁷ by raising the dead through his mystical



IT TOOK COURAGE TO MAKE IT TAKES COURAGE TO SEE!

bond with long-buried comrades and the alchemical force of his spirit. This portrait was in keeping with Gance's fictional and biographical heroes during this period in his filmmaking career. Consider the Beethoven of Gance's *Un Grand Amour de Beethoven* (1937, also available from Connoisseur Video), who "conquers Art through the sheer force of his willpower"²⁸ just as Diaz seems to conjure from the elements a manifestation of the dead by sheer force of will and his fierce devotion to them. Though reinforced by Gance's cinematic alchemy, Francon's portrayal of Diaz potently manifests such emotions in and of itself. Francon had lent Gance's fantasy *La Fin du Monde* its only distinguished performance, in marked contrast to Gance's ludicrous rendition of that film's overtly Christ-like protagonist. Gance had learned his lesson well, and here cast Francon as the similarly martyred hero, knowing full well that Francon was up to the task. William Everson properly insisted that "Francon's performance is indisputedly one of the finest in [the horror] genre...[and] may well be one of the best in the whole history of cinema."²⁹

Unlike the silent version, this *J'Accuse* was definitely a horror-fantasy film, intelligently incorporating the "mad scientist" motif (foreshadowed by Francon's earlier role in *La Fin du Monde*) characteristic of the period's genre works starring Boris Karloff. Francon -- a Belgian actor whose other major genre credit was his role as the murdered pianist whose severed hand stalks Peter Lorre in Robert Florey's *The Beast With Five Fingers* (1946) -- occasionally resembles Karloff, particularly when he confronts Edith with the reality of Francois' death. As he returns from his night visit to the cemetery, white-haired and ashen, the superficial similarity to Karloff's Warner Brothers and Columbia vehicles becomes more overt. Any such resemblance to the period's horror films remained superficial: where Hollywood preferred the safe distance of mock-European Gothicism or the occasional provocative exotic like *Island Of Lost Souls* (1933), *J'Accuse* used its fantastique elements to vigorously dissect and embody contemporary and all-too-real social and emotional forces that were at work even as he prepared the feature for release.

Gance's *J'Accuse* opened January 21, 1938, earning "excellent returns in [France]," *Variety* reported, adding that "European tension should serve as added reason for its success."³⁰ The success was short-lived, however. The silent *J'Accuse* had been a sensation throughout Europe in 1919, its audiences gravitating and responding to its reflective catharsis in the wake of a war that everyone could agree had been terrible. The mirror proffered by the remake came on the eve of war, making it a brave and dangerous motion picture, "much more strident in its indictment of war and of the capitalists who stood to gain from it"³¹ at a time when there were many profiteering Henri Chimays in Europe. Gance's volatile tract served no sanctioned political goal save peace, which seemed impossible, and did so with a fiery anger that stood in stark contrast to the comparatively benign moral perspective of Renoir's celebrated *La Grande Illusion*. *J'Accuse* was immediately banned in Germany, fueling its initial success until an increasingly timid European theatre found Gance's tract untenable.

Many rejected Gance's bravura and romanticism, as "political circumstances had changed more dramatically than critical terms of reference...for many, Gance the poet had become a prattler."³² Gance's embracing of metaphoric fantasy, however emotionally rousing its impact, offered no pragmatic solutions to the social and political malaise that was coalescing into a seemingly inevitable war. Gance began work on screenplays for two projects designed to confront similar issues in a more naturalistic manner: *La Patrie en Danger* and *Bleu, Blanc, Rouge*, which would together mount "a virulent attack on Nazi militarism and an appeal to the national cultural values of France."³³ Hitler's 1940 occupation of France

rendered both projects obsolete, and drove Gance into the Free Zone in southern France to direct *La Venus Aveugle* (premiered 1941, released 1943). In the end, the duplicity of a government struggling first to repel and then to accommodate invading Nazi forces interpreted *J'Accuse* as a treasonous work prior to the occupation, and Gance's film was subsequently banned in France (a vindicated Gance re-released a truncated version in 1947). The French government reportedly "tried recalling the anti-war film...because it was produced when [President] Daladier was promoting peace,"³⁴ adding to the relevance and notoriety of Gance's film when it opened in unoccupied countries.

In England, *J'Accuse* was a double-edged embarrassment, both politically (its 'aggressive pacifism' only accentuating the absurdity of the British government's official stance, trying to ignore Nazi activities in the European theatre) and as a particularly volatile incarnation of a despised cinematic genre. Horror films were reviled and often banned in the U.K. throughout the 1930s and into the 40s, and *J'Accuse* was stigmatized accordingly. It was initially banned by the "British Board of Film Censors...by refusing it a certificate of any kind," but ironically "...their own 'H' [Horror, for adult audiences only] certificate saved it, and the local London censors were able to appeal and use the protection of the 'H' to get it shown in a London art house...of course that classification did hurt its boxoffice potential, especially in the genteel ambience of the British art theatre...it became 1938's only 'H' release in Britain..."³⁵

J'Accuse played in America as both *That They May Live* and *I Accuse* ("use either title or both," the pressbook exclaimed), opening in New York City's Filmarte Theatre on November 6, 1939. The distributors, Arthur Mayer and Joseph Burstyn, Inc. of New York, mounted an effective but modest roadshow release for their abbreviated version of Gance's film.³⁶ The new title was derived from the Biblical quote from Ezekiel (37, 1, 4-10) which replaced Gance's original pre-credits dedication:

And there was a noise: And, behold, a shaking: And the bones came together -- Bone to his bone... Then said the Lord: 'Come from the four winds, O breath! And breathe upon these slain. That they may live!' And the breath came into them. And they lived. And stood up upon their feet; An exceeding great army...

"The film was purchased for American release before the break of the new war," *Liberty* magazine proclaimed, "...attempts were made to keep it back but it slipped through just as hostilities started."³⁷ Mayer and Burstyn's roadshow campaign sensationally played up the film's 'Banned in Europe' status, but remained a remarkably dignified affair given its distribution circuit. Harry Glass' re-edit of Gance's original proved surprisingly creditable, as were novelist and newspaper columnist Pierre van Paassen's translation subtitles -- another indication of the serious distribution Mayer and Burstyn intended for their acquisition. Its antiwar stance was embraced in 1939 and into 1940, a time when American policy favored noninvolvement in the evolving European and Pacific war fronts; by 1941, however,


That They May Live was an anachronism counterproductive to the media mobilization of the public as America eased -- and after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, plunged -- into what was now World War Two. During the year of its release, however, *That They May Live* was already on tenuous commercial ground.

Though both New York and Hollywood premieres earned uniformly rave reviews and press from prestigious metropolitan, national, and industry sources, *That They May Live* opened at the Filmarte Theatre, which "had a checkered career and a marquee that [had] been lighted only occasionally...But neither the location, nor the prosaic exterior of the theatre, [kept] customers from the boxoffice..."³⁸ during the opening week. The Filmarte engagement soon ended, however, as the feature was moved to the Rialto, with theatrical displays playing up its horror content (see photo in ECCO #16) to strong initial boxoffice: "...the pix had previously played the local Filmarte, but reportedly the element of 'horror' upon which Rialto patrons thrive was a bit too much for the predecessor 'arty' audiences..."³⁹

EXHIBITOR

**THAT
THEY MAY LIVE**

Mayer-Burstyn 73 Min.



This French feature is probably the most outstanding anti-war film that has been shown since the current hostilities, and for those who like their propaganda in the raw, this one will prove a treat. How it ever got through France speaks well for the French liberal thought.

A soldier who was through the last war tries to stop all wars. He goes mad and calls upon the dead soldiers to arise and stop the new war. They rise from their graves and march against the war mongers. The leader is cremated by a mob.

The closeups of the ghosts, showing their terrible facial mutilations, although repulsive, are strong. Directed by Abel Gance and starring Victor Francen, this will appeal to the ultra sophisticated. — L. M.

The difficulties the distributor faced were obvious before the end of *That They May Live*'s first month of release. Foreign films -- particularly in subtitled, rather than dubbed, form -- were a hard-sell in America at the time, especially in the rural circuits. If it had been dubbed into English, *That They May Live*'s horrific content might have been easily and opportunistically exploited with the hysteric ballyhoo of a huckster like Kroger Babb, but Mayer and Burstyn were clearly aiming for an upscale audience, putting its unnerving climax at commercial odds with its dignified, subtitled foreign status. Mayer and Burstyn's advertising campaign and boxoffice showcases uneasily straddled both its horrific and higher aspirations. "Its American career may be

shortened...by the same forces of evil...which have removed it from the gaze of European audiences." *Variety* paranoiacally conjectured; a more realistically prophetic assessment followed, pointing out that "where the rule prevails that the function of the screen is to entertain solely, and where tragedy isn't worth the negative cost...the American film industry may pronounce it as 'propaganda' that shall have no place in theatres dedicated to girly musicals, adventure fantasies and domestic farces."⁴⁰ The British 'H' certificate both permitted and plagued its fleeting U.K. release, which parallels the status of *J'Accuse* as being neither straight 'art' nor horror.

That They May Live all too soon faded into undeserved obscurity, alongside other roadshow curios, studio cast-offs, and ironically -- pro-war 'hate' films of the forties such as *Hitler, Beast Of Berlin; The Scorched Earth; Beasts Of The East; and The Master Race*.⁴¹

Save for rare, late-night television showings, *J'Accuse* remained in limbo until the rediscovery of Abel Gance's work in the sixties, largely through the efforts of historian, archivist, and filmmaker Kevin Brownlow. Film society showings of the various versions of Gance's masterpiece *Napoleon* (all incomplete; as Brownlow noted, inspiring the massive project of restoration that would consume almost two decades of his life) would occasionally flesh out the program with truncated versions of the 1938 *J'Accuse*, along with other films from Gance's oeuvre. Brownlow recalls a 1964 London Film Festival showing of *J'Accuse* "When Victor Francen makes his great pronouncement about the inevitability of the next war, Gance whispered... 'Not bad as a prophecy'."⁴²

Horror genre practitioners (Robert Bloch in the pages of early *Famous Monsters Of Filmland*) and cinema scholars (Peter Cowie, *Seventy Years Of Cinema*; William K. Everson, *More Classics Of The Horror Film*) occasionally acknowledged its stature, but *J'Accuse* remained a rare and relatively unknown treasure. BBC-2's 1968 premiere broadcast of Brownlow's tantalizing documentary *Abel Gance - The Charm Of Dynamite* stirred further interest, affording glimpses of the 1919 *J'Accuse* for the first time in decades. The 1979 Telluride and FILMEX exhibitions of the Harris' restoration of Gance's sound *J'Accuse* perfectly coincided with the renewed interest in Gance and *Napoleon* that Brownlow's Herculean efforts had attracted. The January 1981 showing of the restored *Napoleon* at New York's Radio City Music Hall prompted limited screenings of the restored *J'Accuse* in New York⁴³...rescued, finally, from oblivion and being seen by new generations.

Gance's grandiose and moving horror epic remains a riveting, audacious vision. Though rarely seen, its resonant climactic tableau has touched a few contemporary *fantastique* features. The echoes are dim indeed. None of Gance's descendants approach *J'Accuse*'s scope and all eschewed its intent, from the crude pastiche of the Halperin Brothers' *Revolt Of The Zombies* (1936, lifting from the silent version) and Giuseppe Vari's pebla *Roma contro Roma (War Of The Zombies, 1964)*, to the ersatz 'Nazi zombie' inversions of Ken

Wiederhorn's *Shock Waves* (1977), Joel Reed's *Night Of The Zombies* (1981), or Jess Franco and Jean Rollin's eighties variations (*Zombie Lake*, *Oasis Of The Zombies*, etc.). By the time this lineage arrived at Sam Raimi's *Army Of Darkness* (the 1992 sequel to *The Evil Dead* shorn of its wonderful original title, *The Medieval Dead*), xenogenesis had thoroughly asserted itself.

George Romero's "Dead" trilogy provided a compelling extrapolation of Gance's concept, though its most ambitious entry remains the unfilmed original screenplay to *Day Of The Dead* (1985), which indeed emulated the scope and social indictment of Gance's fantasy as expressed with Romero's characteristically broad, violent strokes. *Day Of The Dead* was completed only after considerable revamping to compensate for eleventh-hour budgetary restrictions which telescoped Romero's truly apocalyptic anti-military polemic into a claustrophobic reduction of his original intentions. Bob Clark and Alan Ormsby's *Deathdream* (1972) effectively melded W.W. Jacobs' "The Monkey's Paw" with Gance's notion of the dead soldier returning home to his loved ones as a ghoulish personification of the horrors of the war. Thanks to Ormsby's tightly-focused screenplay, leading intimately detailed confrontational horrors to a shattering climax, *Deathdream* was a worthy compression of *J'Accuse's* moral and thematic concerns.

J'Accuse remains one of the period's boldest genre classics, its revival long overdue. William Everson wistfully suggested that *J'Accuse* might "become the most intellectual (and rewarding) of all the midnight cult favorites, hopefully even bouncing *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* from its number-one position."⁴⁴ Just as frivolously, one can conjecture what *J'Accuse* might have meant to the sixties Aquarian counter-culture had they been able to experience it. A youth movement so passionately dedicated to visionary alternatives and mobilized against the Vietnam War may have found *J'Accuse* a powerful galvanizing experience. After all, George Romero's *Night Of The Living Dead* (1968) similarly fixated that same generation's fears with its horrific appropriation of Gance's fantasy, bringing the War home to the banal complacency of rural America via another army of the dead -- now infectious and cannibalistic -- a still-timely metaphor rendered more visceral with its explicit mayhem. Romero and his co-creators sought only to terrify, and did so. Gance, ever the visionary, sought to terrify, provoke, and inspire. *J'Accuse* still does.

"I accuse mankind of having learned no lesson from the last catastrophe, but waiting with folded arms for the next war.
I accuse the careless, the short-sighted, the egotists
of dismembering a tortured Europe, in spite of
the blood spilled in vain.
I accuse the men of today, not only of not understanding,
but of laughing cynically when someone like myself
reminds you of the most beautiful expression on earth --
'Love one another.'

And I accuse you same men of not having listened
to the voices of millions who died in the war
who cry out to you for twenty years:
'Stop! You're taking the same terrible path!'"

- Jean Diaz (Victor Francen) in *J'Accuse* (1938)

[Special thanks to Tim Lucas, Charles Kilgore, Neil Gaiman, and Bill Kelley; please note that I have taken the liberty of combining the best of both subtitled translations of the dialogue quoted at the conclusion of this article.]

NOTES

- 21/ Jean Epstein was renowned for his inventive Edgar Allan Poe adaptation *La Chute de la Maison Usher* (*The Fall Of The House Of Usher*, 1928), while Walter Ruttmann had composed the modernist cine-symphony *Berlin - Die Symphonie einer Grosstadt* (1927).
- 22/ *The Encyclopedia Of Science Fiction Movies*, edited by Phil Hardy, Aurum Press/Woodbury Press, 1984/86, pg. 83.
- 23/ Norman King, *Abel Gance: A Politics Of Spectacle*, BFI Publishing, 1984, pg. 158.
- 24/ King, *Ibid.*, pg. 243.
- 25/ Everson, *More Classics Of The Horror Film: Fifty Years Of Great Chillers*, Citadel Press, 1986, pg. 71.
- 26/ Everson, *Ibid.*
- 27/ King, *Ibid.*, pg. 137.
- 28/ Roger Icart, from an unpublished (circa 1984) manuscript for *Abel Gance, Lausanne, L'Age d'homme*. Chapter 9; quoted by Norman King, *Abel Gance*, pg. 168.
- 29/ Everson, *Ibid.*, pg. 73.
- 30/ Hugo, *J'Accuse* review in *Variety*, May 3, 1939.
- 31/ King, *Ibid.*, pg. 168.
- 32/ King, *Ibid.*, pg. 51.
- 33/ King, *Ibid.*, pg. 169.
- 34/ Walter Winchell, "French Seek Recall of Anti-War Movie." November 1939; quoted from clipping in the pressbook for U.S. release as *That They May Live*.
- 35/ Everson, *More Classics Of The Horror Film*, pg. 71.
- 36/ The running time for *Connoisseur Video's* restored version is 125 minutes, while *Sinister Cinema's* print of *That They May Live* clocks in at 72 minutes and 30 seconds. "Hugo's" review for *Variety*, May 3, 1939, from a Paris screening running 95 minutes reported that "some expert scissoring snipped nearly an hour from the film to its present length...the new version should go well any place where democracy is the by-word."
Norman King reported an original running length of "4,500 [metres] reduced to 3,300 [metres] for distribution," confirming both *Connoisseur's* restored

cut and the Paris running time cited by Hugo, and added that Gance's 1947 re-release ran only 2,750 metres (King, *Abel Gance*, pg.s 243).

While some sources claim U.S. television prints are circulating that run 95 minutes, this seems unlikely and is probably traceable to the original *Variety* review. *That They May Live's* 1939 pressbook does not list a definitive running time, but the review cuppings reproduced inside list running times of 73-75 minutes, indicating that *Sinister Cinema's* print is indeed a complete representation of the U.S. release version.

For a complete overview of the differences between the U.S. cut and the restored version of *J'Accuse*, see my article in an upcoming issue of Tim and Donna Lucas' *Video Watchdog*.

- 37/ 'Beverly Hills' (pseudonym?), "War As It Really Is," *Liberty*, November 1939.
- 38/ John C. Flinn, "Film Showmanship," *Variety*, November 15, 1939.
- 39/ 'Phil M. Daly,' "Along the Rialto," *The Film Daily*, November 1939.
- 40/ John C. Flinn, *Ibid.*
- 41/ For more on these films, see Charles Kilgore, "The Hate Film: Propaganda As Exploitation," *ECCO #4* (July/August 1988) and #5 (Sept./Oct. '88).
- 42/ Kevin Brownlow, *Napoleon: Abel Gance's Classic Film*, Jonathan Cape Ltd. (U.K.), 1983, pg. 191.
- 43/ Fortunate New York City cineastes recall the overwhelming experience of seeing *Napoleon* and *J'Accuse* back-to-back. Consider the contrary romantic orientations of both films, the paradox "that an artist whose pacifist credentials included *J'Accuse* could give to [Napoleon], a film about France's greatest warrior, 'my soul, my heart, my life, my health'." (Brownlow, *Napoleon*, pg. 160.)
- 44/ Everson, *More Classics Of The Horror Film*, pg. 73.

Blue Lady

by Charles Kilgore

Purportedly based on Krafft-Ebing's famous study of sexual dysfunction, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Albert Zugsmith's *On Her Bed Of Roses* (1966) more closely resembles a particularly perverse soap opera for sexploitation audiences. Its journeyman stabs at psychology are less illuminating about its pedestrian representations of mental illness than about the psychology behind the making and marketing of exploitation films. One can only speculate on the sort of psychology that prompted Zugsmith to claim in the film's press materials that no director was used in its making; according to the pressbook, the cameraman simply shot Zugsmith's script as written. Well, so much for your auteur theory.

On Her Bed Of Roses is actually a love story of sorts, a psychiatrist's couch recounting of the brief courtship of two disturbed teenagers. Melissa Borden, a

promiscuous society girl in love with her father, is compelled by her incestual longings to seek out older men for one-night stands and then watch as her slut of a mother steals them from her. Stephen Long, her next-door neighbor, is dominated by his overbearing mother to absurd extremes, sublimating his sex drive into the meticulous cultivation of roses. Melissa and Stephen's unusual affair culminates in tragedy and violence (don't worry, I'm not giving away anything that Zugsmith doesn't reveal in the film's opening scene).

But forget Zugsmith's interpretations of Krafft-Ebing's cases of sexual sickness -- any psychological overview of *On Her Bed Of Roses* should center on the film's intended audience. The character of Melissa Borden, a pretty blonde whose sexual aggressiveness manages to rival the perverse affections of Stephen's mother, is Zugsmith's attempt to incite the fantasies of passive male viewers. Yet unlike most exploitation films, a category in which it nevertheless belongs, *On Her Bed Of Roses* is concerned more with seduction than sexplay. Except for an extended party sequence with bare-breasted dancers, Zugsmith chooses to savor the moments before a gratification that never seems to come. Although psychological mumbo-jumbo is not rare in exploitation films (usually as a way of squaring-up with morality crusaders), it's usually irrelevant to the central concern of delivering enough flesh and thrills to compensate for the absence of an actual movie. *On Her Bed Of Roses* is a striking anomaly.

With several notable exceptions, Zugsmith's cast is his strongest suit. Sandra Lynn is particularly impressive as the abrasive "nymphomaniac" Melissa. While not as believable as Lynn, Ronald Warren, hot off Zugsmith's previous "adults only" project, *The Incredible Sex Revolution* (1965), nevertheless conveys just the right vulnerability as the disturbed mama's boy Stephen. Unfortunately, real-life psychologist Lee Gladden, a "technical advisor" for the film and also an alumnus of *The Incredible Sex Revolution*, cannot match the thespic talents of his co-stars. Along with Richard Clair, whose laughable portrayal of a Sgt. Friday-like detective is one of the film's unintentional comedic highlights, Gladden is pathetic. Note to Gladden: don't give up the day job.

Much of the film's unsettling atmosphere must be credited to composer Joe Greene, whose eerie, atonal score recalls the soundtracks Teiji Ito composed for the films of Maya Deren or the frightening sonic landscapes of the late composer Todd Dockstader ("Luna Park"). Greene's atonal string-sawing adds an aural equivalent to the film's violent visual imagery.

On Her Bed Of Roses represents one of Zugsmith's final features before he dove headfirst into such balls-to-the-wall X-rated

ECCO Books by Charles Kilgore

Pharos Books' recent reissue of William Castle's autobiography *Step Right Up! I'm Going To Scare The Pants Off America* is a must for those who missed the original G.P. Putnam's Sons printing of 1976. The late Castle approached the writing of his book with the same ham-fisted fervor that propelled his best films. The details of the

making of many Castle camp classics comprise the bulk of *Step Right Up!*, but Castle's recollections also provide a casual glimpse of the lesser fringes of the Hollywood studio system. Ultimately Castle proves to be a notorious name-dropper, but his book, modestly subtitled "The Memoirs Of Hollywood's Master Showman," is all the better for it.

Pharos is to be condemned for issuing the reprint without the original's twenty-five photos of Castle taken throughout his career. One photo features Castle posing with a very non-androgynous-looking "Jean Arless" from *Homicidal*; in another he cuts up with his costumed fan club at an opening of *The Tingler*. Their absence from Pharos' paperback edition is a major drawback, as is a cover painting that's uglier than any of Castle's movie campaign artwork. The only improvement over the original is the addition of John Waters' hilarious introduction, which includes his admission that Polyester's Odorama was inspired by Castle's gimmicks.

Speaking of gimmicks, Mark Thomas McGee's *Beyond Ballyhoo: Motion Picture Promotion and Gimmicks* (McFarland & Company, Inc.) neatly sums up each major trend in motion picture gimmickery in its own chapter, with plenty of photos and ad mats thrown in to make turning the pages more rewarding. McGee covers all the gimmicks and stunts, but with a bored, detached aloofness that fails to convey any enthusiasm for his subject. Twice McGee criticizes the films of William Castle as being silly, which should be high praise given the book's gleefully lowbrow subject matter. But

alas, the glee isn't there; in its place is a fan's obsessive compulsions. When McGee goes rambling about "hooters," you can almost smell the halitosis.

The failure of *Beyond Ballyhoo* is significant, for its subject truly deserves a livelier book. It's another blow to McFarland's hit-and-miss reputation as publishers and a must to avoid by all but the most committed fans of movie gimmickery.

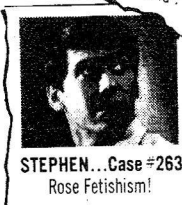
Bookwise, the pick of this issue is Rudolph Grey's *Nightmare Of Ecstasy, the Life and Art of Edward D. Wood, Jr.* (Feral

UNBELIEVABLE! If not torn from the pages of the astonishing thesis of aberrations!

ON HER BED OF ROSES
a Feature Film by Albert Zugsmith
based on
DR. KRAFFT-EBING'S PSYCHOPATHIA SEXUALIS

the
ROSE
fetish...

the strangest
SEX symbol
since Eve
made Adam eat
the apple!



RECOMMENDED FOR THE ADULT MIND!

A Famous Players Corporation Production

fare as *Sappho Darling* (1969), *Two Roses And A Golden Rod* (1970), and others that make the former film look like *Touch Of Evil*. But then, Zugsmith didn't hire a former boy genius to helm his Krafft-Ebing tribute; apparently he hired no one. Too bad Zugsmith's "no director" concept didn't take hold. We all may have been spared Oliver Stone.

[*On Her Bed Of Roses*, under the title *Psychopathia Sexualis*, is an upcoming release from Something Weird Video. See their ad on the inside back cover.]

House Publishers). Grey's biography of cult filmmaker Wood is a definitive portrait of this American eccentric. It is a must for anyone interested in Wood's movies or exploitation films in general.

Nightmare Of Ecstasy began as hours of interviews conducted by Grey with dozens of Wood's family, friends, and associates, all who (some anonymously) offered their reminiscences of the transvestite ex-Marine filmmaker. Grey then whittled down the interviews into separate responses and rearranged them in an order that advances **Nightmare Of Ecstasy** both chronologically and thematically. This cut-and-paste job actually heightens the intensity of Wood's story, particularly his terrible fall into alcoholic squalor.

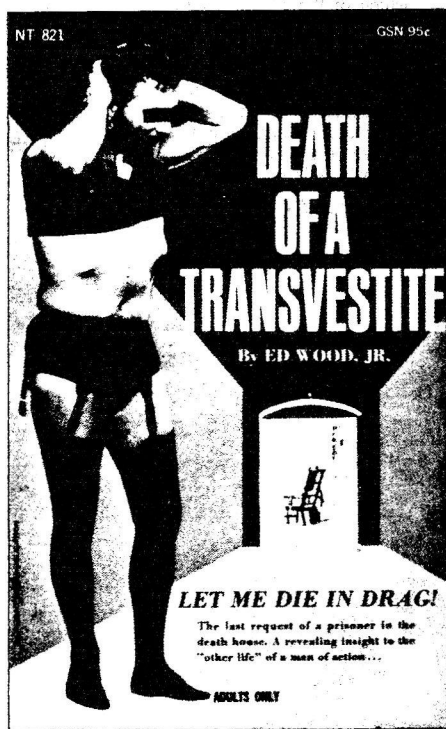
Although Grey's collaborators reflect on Wood's life as a Hollywood tragedy, the Ed Wood of Grey's early chapters is a gregarious, womanizing playboy who exploits his minor celebrity status solely for fun. His filmmaking regularly gives way to bar-hopping and endless parties with Tinseltown's outcasts. Later chapters reveal Wood to be the victim of crooked financiers and predatory street criminals alike, and a pathetic slave to the bottle. **Nightmare Of Ecstasy** captures both sides of Wood, the con artist and the conned artist. The most fascinating film book so far this year, it's highly recommended to the merely curious as well as to hardcore Wood fans.

Ed Wood by Charles Kilgore

Pity poor Edward D. Wood, Jr. By 1969, his career in making those inimitable horror movies long gone, Wood was laboring in the smutty book trade and occasionally submitting scripts to softcore porn filmmakers. Some he even acted in, such as **Mrs. Stone's Thing** (see last issue) and **The Photographer** (1969), which was also released as **Love Feast** and **The Fabulous Feast Of Love**. Of the latter, the less said, the better.

The opening sequence of **The Photographer** features a nude woman clumsily gyrating while the camera pans in on various parts of her anatomy, upon which are painted the film's credits. **Mrs. Stone's Thing** director Joseph F. Robertson is "listed" as producing, directing, and writing the script. In his **Nightmare Of Ecstasy** (see review above), author Rudolph Gray claims that Wood himself wrote the script. Reportedly, Robertson now claims that Wood also directed. A viewing of the film illustrates why Robertson would defer directorial credits.

The Photographer opens with Mr. Murphy (Wood), a nudie photographer, greeting a young woman from a modeling agency at his doorstep. Murphy, it seems, has instructed the agency to send him more models to photograph. Inviting her inside, he tricks the somewhat skittish model into disrobing so he can photograph a new line of "see-through clothing." Murphy then escorts the now-compliant girl into his bedroom and attempts to have sex with her. Before he can get fully undressed, another ring of the doorbell forces him out of bed. At the door stands another model who has answered his call; Murphy invites her in,



and soon three bodies are writhing on the king-sized bed. What follows in this one-joke film are a succession of models ringing Murphy's doorbell until his bed is teeming with naked women (and eventually men when a taxicab driver and two plumbers show up to join the fun).

The definitive mise-en-scene of **The Photographer** is of the tangled mass on Murphy's bed, which is repeated ad infinitum as if viewers would be spellbound by the disjointed arms, legs, heads, breasts, buttocks, and pubic hair. Variations occur only at the beginning, which features Wood's seduction of the first model; and at the conclusion, when a carload of dominatrixes invade the movie and force poor Ed to don a dog collar and leash, high heels, panties, and a baby-doll negligee...and then lick their boots! (It's Wood's script, alright.) These scenes sandwich the tedious bedroom orgy described above, which painfully seems to occur in real time. Voyeurism has never before seemed so time-consuming.

Despite Wood's humiliating role in **The Photographer** (throughout much of the film he is clad only in Fruit Of The Loom-style underwear that nearly reaches his amputees), he's its most competent actor. As Murphy, he espouses mildly lewd bon mots while ushering the women into his bedroom (and appearing more exhausted with each new arrival). Although he's a sleazy seducer, Wood's character projects an offbeat charm. When he's off-screen, the movie collapses in a heap with its over-exposed orgiasts.

Wood fanatics will no doubt want to add **The Photographer** to their collection simply for his presence, but all others should be forewarned: this softcore snoozer lacks the offbeat qualities that make Wood's other films so memorable. The

Something Weird Video release runs four minutes shorter than the running time listed in Gray's book, but with **The Photographer** a shorter running time can only be a blessing in disguise.

[The **Photographer** will soon be released, under the alternate title **Love Feast**, by Something Weird Video. See their ad on the inside back cover.]

The Wild World Of Doug Hobart by Charles Kilgore

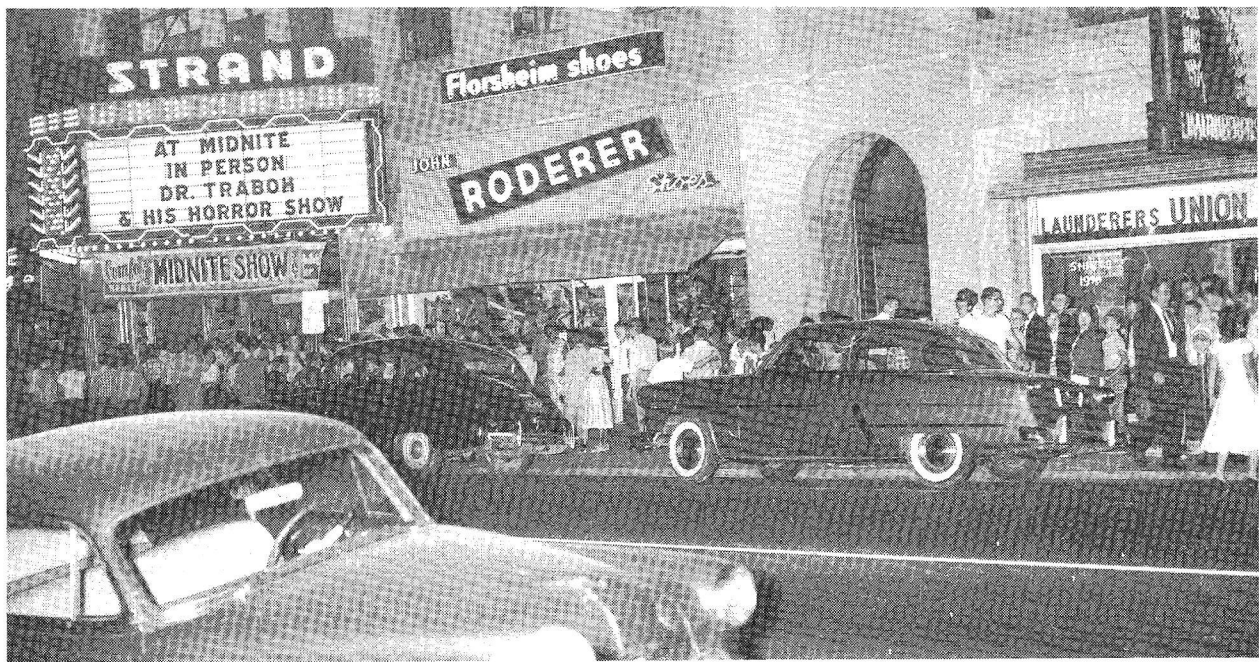
"If you touch the film, you get the disease."
- Julio Chavez, cameraman and film editor.

This is the true story of a man with an incurable disease: a deep-seated urge to make movies. Youthful exposure to this disease propelled Douglas Blake Hobart into his unusual career in the remote fringes of the entertainment industry, where he found his niche as a motion picture makeup man and portrayer of movie monsters. Now retired from the film business, Hobart talked with ECCO about his work in the films of Bill Grefe and others, and about his colorful and varied career as an entertainer.

Although evidence suggests that his disease is genetic, a stronger argument could be made in Hobart's case that his environment initiated its spread. His family had hoped that Doug would become a musician, but the boy stubbornly resisted the orchestra pit...he wanted to be on the stage. The younger Hobart's fascination with show business was not surprising: father Russell occasionally tripped the footlights himself. Russell was a musician by trade, an alumnus of the Ringling Brothers Circus brass band. In 1927, the year Doug was born in a theatrical boarding house in Middletown, Ohio, Russell was supporting his family by playing full-time in the Armco Steel Radio Band and moonlighting in area theatres and clubs.

When Doug was three, the Hobarts moved to North Miami Beach. There Russell accepted a day job in a glass factory to support his family, restricting his stage career to nighttime and weekends. Young Doug became a mascot for the coterie of musicians, actors, and circus performers that swarmed around his father. The boy was especially fond of actor Jimmy Neary, a family friend who had struggled along with Russell during the Depression. Both men had appeared in the W.P.A.-funded Federal Theatre when no other stage work could be found. It was Neary, a Hollywood veteran whose credits included the John Wayne film **They Were Expendable**, who gave Doug his first theatrical make-up kit; the gift was inspired by the youngster's rapt attention whenever Neary applied his greaspaint. Doug had already attempted make-up techniques at home using wheat paste mixed with water. But unlike Neary, whose make-up reflected standard theatrical roles, young Hobart imitated the movie monsters portrayed by Lon Chaney and Boris Karloff, his idols. At nine years of age, Doug Hobart was already revealing symptoms of the disease.

"Doug was an early version of a horror fan," explains director Fred Olen Ray, a long-time friend who credits Hobart for his



Theater marquee for "Dr. Traboh and His Chamber Of Monsters" late-night spook show. Note the long line.

initial exposure to filmmaking. But unlike the sloth-like, submissive stereotypes who haunt horror conventions, Hobart also exhibited an eagerness to perform. A precocious ten-year-old, Doug approached the programmers of Miami radio station WIOD with "Crusader Kids," a series of "soap operas for children" he had written. The station bought and produced his scripts, and the program enjoyed a successful local run. "Crusader Kids" was a significant accomplishment for a child, but Doug wanted to act. He begged his father to send him to acting school until the elder Hobart begrudgingly consented. At first elated, Doug soon became disillusioned over the chasm between the academic techniques of the classroom and the theatrical showmanship that had first caught his youthful attention. He wanted a career in the theater, but not a life shaped by the formality of acting coaches. His was not a conformist's disease.

Disheartened by the disappointment of acting school, Doug abandoned the classroom for the U.S. Navy in 1945. World War II was raging when he joined up, inspired by friends who seemed to crave combat action. But Hobart never saw battle, for the war ended within six months of his enlistment. Upon his discharge, Doug returned to Ohio and joined the staff of the *Middletown News Journal* as their designer of advertising.

Doug Hobart's first crack at being a showman arrived with the "spook show" craze. Traveling magicians toured the country with late-night shows laced with ghostly effects and gruesome spectacle, and buttressed by scratchy, third-run horror films. The magicians' vivid names promised authority and mystique: Dr. Silkini, Ray-Mond, MacDonald Birch, The Mad Doctor, Dr. Bosco. Hobart loved the spook shows, but was certain that he could improve upon their stale, formulaic set-ups.

His problem was to convince a theatre owner that he could attract a crowd.

Hobart's solution was the time-honored huckster practice of duping available media resources to create interest, although he typically stretched the gimmick to its limit. One clear night, Hobart dragged a bandage-wrapped mannequin out of the Middletown cemetery, piled it into the trunk of his car, and drove home. As he had hoped, the act did not go unseen. The following day, a small article in the *Middletown News Journal* reported that an area resident had contacted authorities after seeing a ghoulish figure abduct a body from the cemetery. The bizarre stunt was also observed by Hobart's neighbors, who called the police. Just before dawn, a squad car pulled into Hobart's driveway. The officers who served him with a search warrant were in for a shock: Hobart's basement had been carefully designed to resemble a chamber of horrors, with gauze-wrapped mannequins doubling for corpses. Hobart was summarily arrested and led from his basement while an overzealous cop ripped the bandages from his cemetery "mummy."

When no evidence of foul play was discovered among the mannequins, Hobart was freed by a bemused chief of police the following day. Scanning the *Middletown News Journal* upon returning home, he learned that the incident had been the subject of a sensationalistic article that had set Middletown abuzz. Now the disease spread to every drop of blood in Doug Hobart's body. He had become - overnight - a Middletown celebrity, and with this authority he approached the local Strand theater with ideas for performing a midnight spook show. Impressed by Hobart's notoriety and his apparent show business acumen, the Strand's manager hired him on the spot.

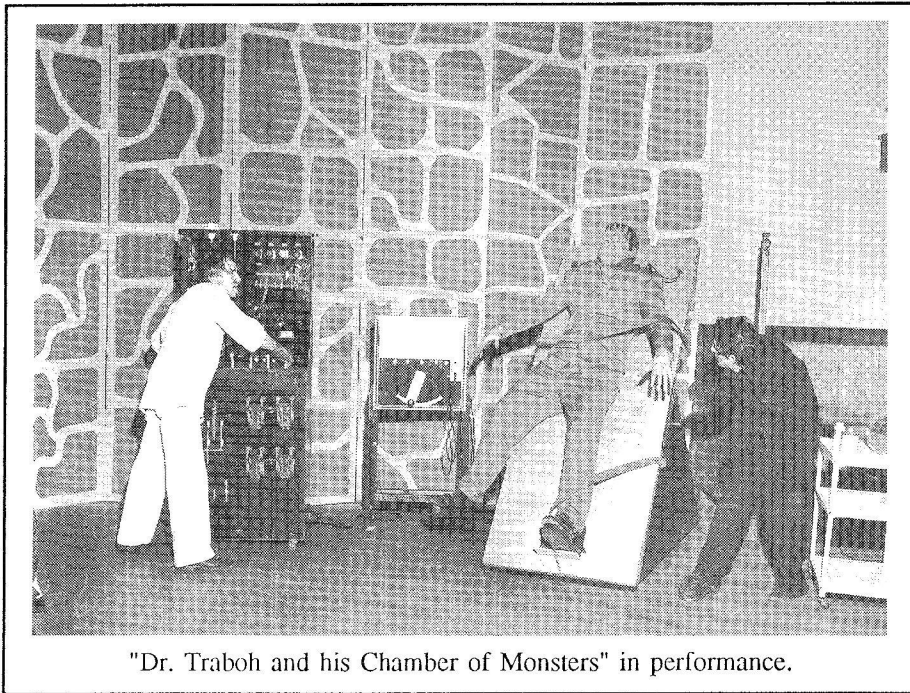
Under the nom-de-theatre "Dr. Traboh" ("Hobart" backwards), the aspiring entertainer mounted an ambitious presentation with a full cast of fifteen actors, dancers, and magicians, as well as a phony nurse stationed in the lobby should someone require medical attention from panic or shock. A typical performance of "Dr. Traboh And His Chamber Of Monsters" would begin with a classic film such as R.K.O.'s *The Body Snatcher*. As the feature concluded, the theater screen would lift to reveal Hobart's gothic sets, including painted flats and a full-scale **Frankenstein** laboratory modeled after Kenneth Strickfadden's set-ups for the Universal films. In between ghoulish magic stunts inspired by the Grand Guignol and live "fights" between the Frankenstein monster and the Wolfman, the audience was entertained by a lineup of flimsily-clad chorines dubbed The Dragonettes, who jumped and gyrated to the theme from *Dragnet*. For the show's finale, the "nurse" would enter the theater only to be attacked by a snarling Wolfman. As the bogus nurse fought and screamed, the furry fiend would shred away her uniform to reveal a flesh-colored body stocking underneath. To the astonished audience, the actress appeared to be naked as she dashed from the dimly-lit theater, the Wolfman in pursuit.

The show was a local sensation, drawing a bigger crowd than a competing program across town featuring the well-known Dr. Silkini. Hobart and his crew took their show on the road, playing to sell-out audiences across the U.S. During a performance in Greenville, Ohio, a faulty lamp set the proscenium arch of the theater on fire. The curtains blazed, illuminating the stage with flames, but Hobart and his troupe calmly continued the show as if nothing was amiss. Amazingly, the audience also remained seated. "Everybody thought it was part of

the show," recalls Hobart. They were still in their seats when firemen walked onstage to douse the fire. Afterwards, the theater manager, a man named Carruthers, praised Hobart and company for keeping the audience calm throughout what could have been a scene of deadly panic. Carruthers promised to put in a good word about the Dr. Traboh show to his influential friend Kroger Babb, "America's Fearless Showman" himself.

But Babb never called, and Hobart was soon forced to abandon Dr. Traboh when that type of entertainment began to fade. "What killed the spook shows was the introduction of fixed screens," explains Hobart, "and the elimination of stages in theater construction." As older theaters which had originally been built to accommodate live performances fell victim to urban renewal, the spook show masters found fewer and fewer venues available in which to perform.

By 1954 the spook show was virtually dead, and Hobart was ready to try something else. He was fascinated with the idea of making movies, but was unable to find connections in the local film industry. Instead, he teamed up with Shirley Proffit, who had appeared in his spook show as one of the Dragonettes, and the two performed in nightclubs under the name The Odds And Ends. Their routine was borrowed from burlesque: appearing to be drunk, Hobart would wander into the nightclub as a customer and take a seat near the stage.



"Dr. Traboh and his Chamber of Monsters" in performance.

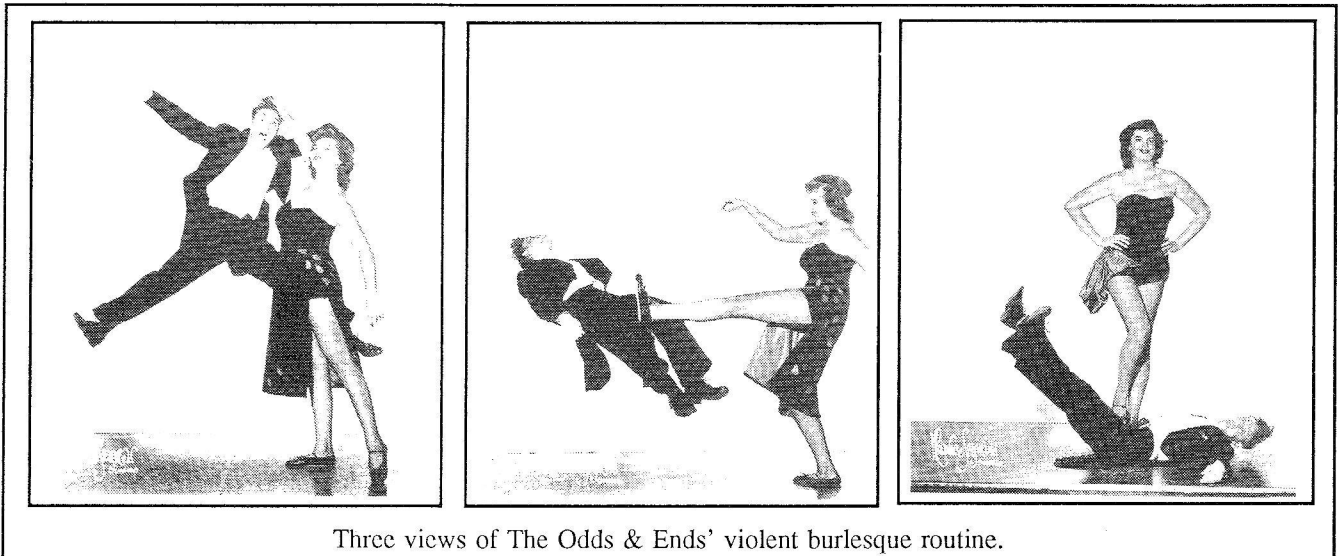
Soon afterwards Proffit would take the stage and break into a sultry song and dance routine to "The Man I Love." At this point Hobart would begin to heckle her from the audience, acting as if he believed that the song's wistful lyrics were directed at him. Aiming a knowing wink at the audience, Proffit would invite the inebriate to dance with her onstage. Then, under the pretense of dancing the tango, Proffit would proceed to pummel, kick, and twist the hapless heckler, all to the audience's delight. The act concluded with Proffit using Hobart as a human mop.

The Odds And Ends performed with other acts in nightclubs and at carnivals throughout Ohio for a year, including a stint at a Cincinnati lounge called The Cat's Fiddle that required them to stage their stunt three times a night. "Some customers enjoyed our act so much that they'd sit through the second program until we came

The Odds And Ends in 1955, and Hobart took a job selling advertising space for the **Middletown News Journal** for the next three years. "At the time," says Hobart, "I had no idea how that experience would help me later." He also had no idea that his entry into movies was just around the corner.

In 1958, Hobart received a call from his friend Tom McCane, an alumnus of Dr. Traboh's Chamber Of Monsters. McCane invited Hobart to join him in his current project, a proposed television pilot about the fictitious Professor Wilmer, a scientist attempting to use his new "shock ray" invention to cure a friend's unexplained lycanthropy. Hobart joined up, helping McCane locate financing and actors for the production. John Copeland, who had performed on Broadway in *Inherit The Wind*, was currently appearing at Ohio's Chitauqua Theater, as was New York actor Vin Della Rocca. Both men agreed to star

on and did our thing," Hobart reflects, "and then they'd leave." But after a performance at the Twin Coaches in Pittsburgh, Hobart was informed that Chicago's famed nightclub The Chez Paris had closed. "The handwriting was on the wall," says Hobart of the news that the club's owners had filed for bankruptcy proceedings. Television had begun its inexorable rise as the American entertainment of choice, and the future offered little for Hobart and Proffit's old-fashioned burlesque act. They disbanded



Three views of The Odds & Ends' violent burlesque routine.

in the pilot, which was to be called **The Professor**. On the basis of the commitment of the two Broadway actors, McCane and Hobart were able to convince backers to finance the project.

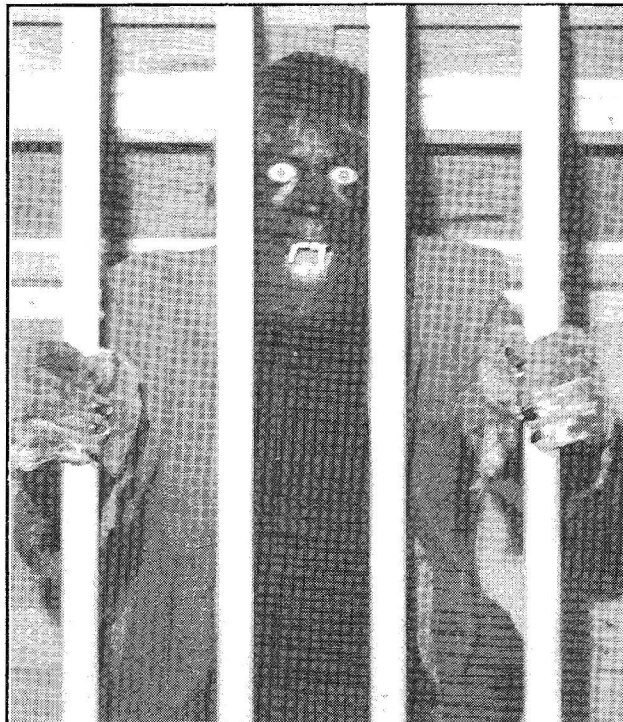
With a budget of \$40,000, **The Professor** was shot in Dayton, Ohio; interiors were filmed in a small studio, exteriors in a nearby wooded area. The cast consisted of Copeland as Wilmer, Della Rocca as an investigative journalist, and several actors from a local "little theater." Reprising one of his roles from the Dr. Traboh days, Hobart portrayed the werewolf as a snarling, hairy beast clad in a tailored suit and tennis shoes! Because of the extremely low budget, the film's "special effects" weren't very special: Dr. Wilmer's "shock ray" is lowered from the ceiling by a rope, and its effects on a test rabbit are clearly the result of editing. Still, the film went overbudget because McCain and Hobart hadn't considered the cost of having prints made and shipped to prospective network buyers.

Unfortunately, McCain was unable to convince the networks to air the 27-minute pilot, which was too talky and amateurish even for early television. The film could only be seen in certain living rooms for thirty-two years. It was introduced to many more living rooms several years ago by Sinister Cinema (see the review in **ECCO #7**).

Disillusioned with his inability to connect with television, the medium that had almost single-handedly killed the spook shows, Hobart moved back to North Miami Beach to work as an advertising salesman for **The Hollywood Sun Tattler**. He sold advertising space to local merchants by creating a popular feature entitled "Mr. Fix-It" that each week singled out and highlighted a different business. Hobart became friends with one of his clients, a mortician named Joe Schramm who introduced him to the world of postmortem reconstruction and make-up. Under Schramm's skillful hands, corpses that had been horribly mangled in car wrecks were made presentable for open-casket funerals. Schramm taught Hobart the uses of derma wax, filament thread, and pancake makeup. "That's where I got most of my training in make-up... funeral homes," claims Hobart. "Actually, I'm a frustrated embalmer."

Inspired by Schramm's example, Hobart attended a school for morticians. But the quiet life of preparing the dead for burial was too isolated, too cold for Hobart. It was also too far from either an audience or a stage. Hobart quit the class to try his newly-acquired skills elsewhere.

In 1961, Hobart auditioned, and was accepted, as an actor for the Carol City Little Theatre of North Miami Beach.



Doug Hobart as the werewolf from his portable sideshow.

There he met Bill Kelly, an aspiring set designer who shared Hobart's love for horror movies. Together they turned the werewolf act of Hobart's stage shows into a mobile attraction that could travel across the country. The two entrepreneurs bought an old circus wagon, painted it in the style of the carnival midway, and sealed off half of its interior with iron bars. For twenty-five cents, patrons would step inside the wagon,

walk towards the bars, and find themselves face-to-face with...the Wolfman!

Actually they were face-to-face with Doug Hobart in make-up, but in an unusually realistic scenario. The werewolf's cage was lined with matted straw, a bag of manure hidden underneath it to produce an authentic animal smell. As the Wolfman, Hobart howled, growled, and tried to grab frightened customers through the bars of his cage. Undemeath his fur-covered gloves were razor-sharp utility knives designed to slip over the fingers. When Hobart slashed at the walls, his steel fingertips gouged furrows into the wood. Taking his cue from carnival "geek" shows, he'd drink water from a rusty metal dish and gnaw at a chained bone. Hobart's werewolf charade played fairs, carnivals, and shopping center openings. "We made a fortune," Hobart recalls. "Girls would scream, and even the guys would jump back. I don't recall anyone asking for a refund. We had repeat customers every time we played it."

Hobart later reprised his wolfman act in a Miami Beach strip joint. The club owner had invited Hobart to create an act for his patrons, and his response was a routine called "Beauty And The Beast." A stripper named Jolene gyrated onstage while guttural growls from behind the curtain competed with the saucy bump'n'grind music. Suddenly the Wolfman rushed in from backstage, grabbed the screaming Jolene, and tore off her clothing bit by bit. It was similar to the Dr. Traboh routine, but Jolene wore no body stocking. The act ended with Hobart leaping off the stage into the audience, Jolene kicking and flailing about in his arms, as the theater was abruptly darkened. When the footlights came back on, both stripper and Wolfman were gone. The audience loudly demonstrated their approval, and backstage the grateful owner begged Hobart to perform the act nightly. Hobart explains why he didn't accept the offer: "He wanted me to do the routine three times a night. I would have had to spend the entire night sitting backstage in that Wolfman makeup when I could have been making better use of my time for what he could afford to pay me."

Hobart was approached in 1965 by a representative from Nationwide Theatre Enterprises, a firm that owned and operated a chain of drive-ins throughout the southeast U.S. The Nationwide rep, who knew of Hobart's prior involvement with spook shows, proposed an idea: why not perform live shows on top of drive-in theater concession stands during intermission? Eager to try a new approach, Hobart agreed to test "Screamorama" at a drive-in owned by Nationwide. He soon regretted the decision.

"I can't think of an easier way to get killed," he now claims in retrospect; as soon as Hobart and his fellow monsters appeared on the concession stand roof, a volley of rocks and bottles were hurled at them by beer-swilling rednecks eager to see real blood. The masked monsters on the roof scrambled to safety from the monsters in pick-up trucks and Chevys. Alas, "Screamorama"

proved to be more frightening for the performers than for its audience, so the concept was retired.

A friend of Hobart's, writer Al Dempsey, introduced him to South Florida filmmaker William Grefe the following year. Having completed two drive-in racing films, one with cars (*The Checkered Flag*, 1963) and the other with boats (*Racing Fever*, 1964), Grefe was ready to try his luck with the burgeoning low-budget horror market.

Hobart auditioned for the role of the father in Grefe's *Sting Of Death*, but the director rejected him as "too young." Hobart drove home, made himself up as an "old man," and rushed back to the audition. Grefe offered him the role, but Hobart nixed it to instead portray the film's monster, a jellyfish man. Because of the unusual costume he had to wear, Hobart's first movie role was almost his last.

"That was the most dangerous picture I ever made in my life. I nearly died twice," recalls

Hobart. As the monster, Hobart wore a modified diver's neoprene wet suit topped by an extra-thick plastic bag fashioned to resemble a huge and lethal form of jellyfish known as the Portuguese man-of-war. The plastic was airtight, requiring Hobart to breathe through a tube underneath the costume that was connected - out of camera

range - to an external air pump. During a fight sequence with Joe Morrison, the film's hero, an inexperienced technician noticed the noisy hum of the air pump and silenced it by unplugging the generator. Unable to breathe, Hobart collapsed, tearing at the airtight hood that was suffocating him. Director Grefe slashed open the plastic, saving Hobart from a ludicrous demise. The

down the back of my costume, and I went into shock," explains Hobart. "They stripped off the costume and gave me first-aid, but I was back into costume and out in that swamp an hour later.

The buoyancy of the air-tight headpiece created additional problems when Hobart was required to creep along the bottom of a swimming pool.

For the headpiece to submerge, the air in the bag had to be replaced with water. This meant that Hobart's head was still immersed even after he surfaced from shooting the scene.

After completing filming on *Sting Of Death*, Grefe realized that his chances of earning a healthy profit would improve if he retained a measure of distribution rights rather than sell the film outright. *Sting Of Death* was made for the drive-in market, but drive-in movies needed co-features. Rather than purchase another studio's film, Grefe made his own co-feature.

Death Curse Of Tartu was a hastily-filmed tale of Seminole retribution from beyond the grave. Hobart was given the role of Tartu, a vengeful Indian spirit who haunts Florida's Everglades. Grefe wanted him to wear a rubber mask as the spirit's mummified corpse, but Hobart pressed to design a customized make-up of his

own. "If you can come up with something, o.k.," Grefe allowed, "but you've only got three weeks." As hard as he tried, Hobart was unable to visualize how Tartu should look. Several nights before his deadline, Hobart had a vivid nightmare in which church officials sold relics of the dead to their families. Hobart watched in horror as

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plastic bag was replaced, but the costume caused Hobart further problems. While filming the monster wading through the swamp, technicians noticed Hobart's unsteady gait and halted the scene. The hot Florida sun had raised his body temperature to 107 degrees underneath the costume: Hobart was on the verge of a heat stroke. "Someone poured a bucket of ice



DESPERATELY STRUGGLING for his life is John Hoyt (played by Joe Morrison), although weakened by the paralyzing sting of the human Man-Of-War in "Sting of Death," filmed in vivid Eastman Color and Scope in the wilds of the Everglades, and opening at the Theatre on, together with the co-chiller "Death Curse of Tartu."



TRANSFIXED BY THE HORROR of the human Man-Of-War are Karen and John, played by Valerie Hawkins and Joe Morrison, in the exciting underwater thriller "Sting Of Death" opening

his dream-self stopped beside an open grave and peered down into the face of a withered, rotting corpse. "My God, it's me!" he shouted, and woke up trembling in a cold sweat. The desiccated face of the corpse in his dream became the face of Tartu. In addition to essaying the role of Tartu, Hobart also handled the film's gore effects...including the grisly aftermath of an alligator attack. He also engineered the concluding quicksand scene by dumping bags of vermiculite on the surface of a small pond.

Grefe's double-bill provided Doug Hobart with his first opportunity for mass exposure as a makeup artist; the program played heavily throughout the South. In fact, **Death Curse Of Tartu** was still making appearances as the second-billed feature at drive-ins from Florida up through the Carolinas as late as 1976. But as Grefe prepared to film his follow-up, the 1967 action film **The Wild Rebels**, Hobart was negotiating with Americana Entertainment Association, a Tampa-based film distribution outfit that owned and operated a chain of nudie theaters that stretched from Knoxville to Buffalo. Joseph Fink, one of the producers of Grefe's double-billed horror movies, was now working with Americana's George Roberts and Eli Jackson. Fink had suggested Hobart's



DOUG HOBART as featured in "THE DEATH CURSE OF TARTU"

services to his partners as the potential solution to their problem: what to do with an "unplayable" movie they had produced.

The three men were certain that no one in their right mind would agree to promote their film once having seen it, so they refused to give Hobart a screening. Instead, they subjected him to the lurid theatrical trailer, which condensed their film into sixty near-painless seconds. To their surprise, Hobart agreed to distribute and promote Americana's folly, an incoherent exploitation feature entitled **The Weird World Of LSD**. "They were amazed that I'd try to sell that particular movie," explains Hobart, "but I saw the experience as a test of my salesmanship abilities."

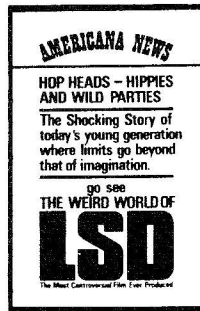
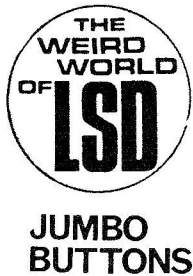
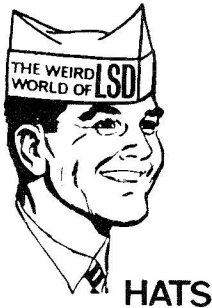
Based only on his having seen the trailer for **The Weird World Of LSD**, Hobart designed the film's advertising campaign around those scant sixty seconds of imagery. Footage of a drag race that had been inexplicably included in the film inspired the slogan "drag racer on LSD" on the poster and pressbook; similarly, scenes of a busty brunette wandering

through a warehouse full of mannequins became "LSD on campus!" Hobart designed paper hats bearing the film's title to be worn by the employees of drive-in snack counters, and oversized buttons for ushers and ticket sellers to pin on their lapels. The pressbook, which was largely inspired by the "Mr. Fix-It" column from Hobart's newspaper days, offered outlandish salesmanship suggestions for the consideration of theater managers as well as tips on how to trick local newspapers into running spicier ad mats. But these exploitation gimmicks all paled when compared to Hobart's next step: selling the film person-to-person while maintaining a straight face.

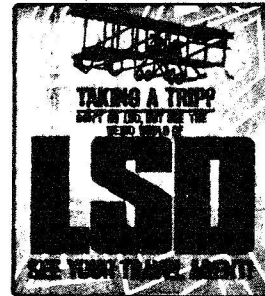
"Brother, this community has got a serious problem, and this very college campus could be caught in the middle!" And so Hobart would preach to college and university deans, flashing newspaper headlines and warning of the social decay to come if drug use wasn't publicly denounced by such respectable community leaders as...themselves. This ploy usually netted Hobart the necessary approval to promote screenings of *The Weird World Of LSD* on campus as if it were some "community awareness" event. But on opening night, instead of the stern documentary they no doubt expected, the campus representatives were treated to a black and white, cheaply-made, stagey series of vignettes that mixed inept gore, cheesy bump'n'grind, and laughably illogical anti-drug moralizing. In other words, they got the film that Hobart had pitched to the theater owner. Meanwhile Hobart was on the phone in his hotel room, hastily setting up appointments

with colleges and universities in the next town.

[Part Two of *The Wild World Of Doug Hobart* will appear in *ECCO* #18, covering his work on *The Hooked Generation*, *Fireball Jungle*, *The Naked Zoo*, and others.]



TABLOIDS

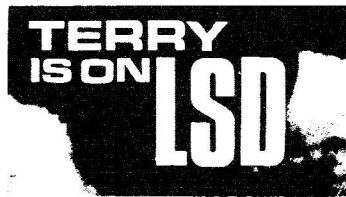


WINDOW CARDS

another "man versus nature" movie. But by having natural forces animated to do the bidding of an Indian spirit (Indians being, in popular culture, closer to the natural Earth than non-Native Americans),

Death Curse Of Tartu
Written and directed by William Grefe
Produced by Joseph Fink and Juan Hidalgo-Gato

Don't tune in to William Grefe's *Death Curse Of Tartu* (Active Home Video) expecting to be frightened or even entertained, yet somehow the tedium, amateurish acting, and overall hokiness of this South Florida schlocker all congeal into a ripe, swampy concoction that defies the



intentions of film criticism. This shouldn't be taken to imply that *Death Curse Of Tartu* is a good movie...it isn't, yet the determination of the filmmakers and their straight-faced approach to the ludicrous material lends it a peculiar charm and helps compensate for its brutally obvious shortcomings.

Death Curse Of Tartu concerns a husband and wife team who lead four archaeology students (two guy-girl couples, naturally) into the wilds of the Everglades to search for Seminole Indian artifacts. When they disturb the gravesite of Tartu, a Seminole spirit whose mouldering remains lie in a tomb hidden in a cave, the archaeologists become the victims of his terrible curse. In the form of a variety of animals (snake, shark, alligator, and finally a Seminole warrior), the bloodthirsty spirit of Tartu traps the students in the swamp and kills them one by one.

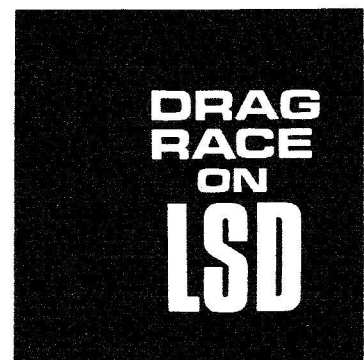
That the viewer actually identifies with Tartu's helpless victims is largely the result of Grefe's clever use of a supposedly remote area within Florida's Everglades as a setting for his supernatural tale, creating a claustrophobic sense of entrapment. *Death*

Curse Of Tartu capitalizes on this scenario by exploiting the common fear of being lost in the wilderness. Thus, Tartu's bidding is done by agents of the wild, all - but for the shark and an anaconda - denizens of the Everglades. Without the horror element of Tartu's curse, Grefe's film would be yet

Grefe distinguishes the landscape itself as sinister rather than as merely inhospitable to civilized man.

But while the animal attacks are thematically strong, they're cinematically weak. The sluggish anaconda of the film's first animal attack seems hardly dangerous despite its formidable size. (Further, attempts to make it look larger by filming it crawling alongside miniature replicas of human skulls laughably backfire when it next slithers past a real coffee pot that suddenly seems gigantic.) In its resulting struggle with actor (and animal trainer) Frank Weed, one worries more about the welfare of the snake. Similarly, Tartu's alligator attack is less than convincing because of the reptile's sluggish crawl; it could be easily outrun (even outwalked!) by the actress that it menaces. Only if the gator's victim were a quadriplegic would the scene be believable. With all the inherent problems in staging realistic animal attacks, one must wonder why Grefe didn't allow the ghost of Tartu to claim any victims in his mummified state.

Death Curse Of Tartu is padded out with footage of snakes slithering, alligators gliding through rust-colored water, and seemingly endless scenes of pursuit. In fact, nearly every scene is too long. This may be a hidden asset: weary from watching the repetitive action, the viewer may feel more closely aligned with the plight of the equally exhausted archaeologists who are no doubt as eager for the film to conclude.



The Weird World Of LSD

Directed by Robert Ground
Produced by George Roberts and Eli Jackson

Of all of the anti-drug movies made since Dwain Esper's notorious *Marihuana!* (1936), *The Weird World Of LSD* (1967) reigns as the most blatant attempt at using a perceived social problem to justify the marketing of a minimal motion picture. Minimal is the key word: *Weird World* is essentially a collection of vignettes, filmed without live sound in black and white, that relate to the use of LSD only because a narrator intones as much. But unlike most exploitation dope exposes, *Weird World* entertains not so much for the camp humor of watching misinformation paraded around in a low-budget melodrama, but because of the filmmakers' refusal to take their ostensible anti-drug mission with any serious intent whatsoever. Instead, they titillate with near-nudity and childish gore at every opportunity, hoping that the viewer will hang around hoping for more explicit thrills.

To be fair, some of director Ground's more outre' images linger on however hard one tries to dismiss them. The pre-credit sequence depicting the screaming victim of a bad trip as he recoils from a wriggling, two-dimensional cartoon chicken, all to the strains of the infuriating flute music from *The Astounding She Monster* (1958) (and later recycled by Andy Milligan for *The Rats Are Coming, The Werewolves Are Here*), is the pinnacle of unintentional surrealism. Other memorable segments feature an exotic dancer gyrating on a set that resembles a

bargain-basement version of *Twin Peaks'* Black Lodge, a fat man whose acid fantasy transforms his paltry meal into a kingly feast, and a comely college coed whose nighttime dip in the pool while dosed on the drug causes her to hallucinate a journey through a warehouse full of mannequins that mutate into bare-chested men in pantyhose.

Other segments are more pointedly designed to elicit vicarious thrills and chills. A clean-cut young tripper slashes the throat of his girlfriend after hallucinating that her face resembles a grotesque rubber mask. In a shabby bar, a shapely "beauty contestant" demonstrates the effects of LSD on a

narcissistic personality by performing an impromptu table-top striptease with a pair of scissors. But perhaps the funniest of these sleazier segments features a pudgy, would-be romeo fondling his collection of girlie stills. He's a loser, claims the narrator, because "to love all women is to love no woman."

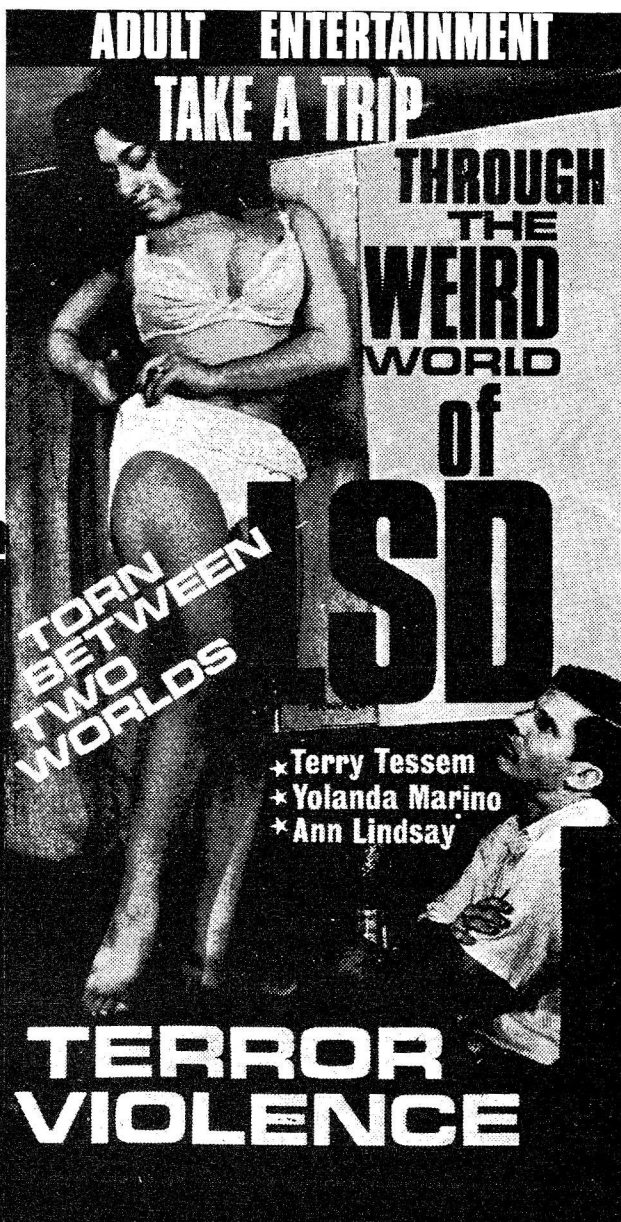
As can be surmised by these scenarios, the filmmakers were only after their audience's money. This is made clear in one sequence when the narrator identifies a character as an acid dealer, noting that the profiteering scoundrel never uses LSD himself. The same dealer is later seen committing a murder while, according to the narrator, under the influence of LSD. If the dealer changed his policy about not taking the drug, the narrator forgot to inform us. To cut costs, the filmmakers also made judicious use of stock footage and segments culled from what appears to be striptease films (the producers, Americana Entertainment, owned a string of adult theaters). Some of this stock footage, such as the famed "drag racer on LSD" sequence, is forced uncomfortably into the narrative merely by the suggestions of the narrator.

As a curio of the drug generation, for this film certainly represents the interests of the counter-culture more than those of sincere anti-drug forces, *The Weird World Of LSD* is an invaluable addition to any trash maven's collection of exploitation esoterica. For its outrageous chicanery in purporting to be something that it clearly is not, this lowbrow, low-budget mock expose deserves widespread recognition among today's acidheads (who, I might add, seem to be in desperate need of some inspiration). Why attend a Grateful Dead concert when you can grab this movie, drop a tab of good windowpane, and "ride the bird" until your nose bleeds?

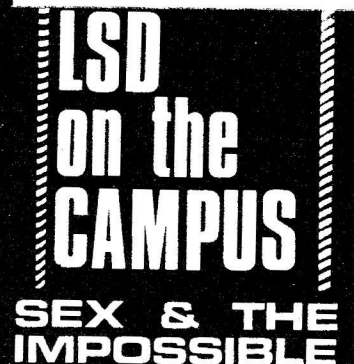
[*The Weird World Of LSD* is available from Something Weird Video (see their ad on the inside back cover) for \$23.00 postpaid.]

NEXT ISSUE: *The Wild World Of Doug Hobart, Part II. Barbet Schroeder: The Moth In The Flame.* Plus more wild exploitation from the swingin' sixties!

RIPPED FROM TODAY'S HEADLINES!



★ Terry Tessem
★ Yolanda Marino
★ Ann Lindsay



FILMED DEEP IN THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES

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IS HORROR!**

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DEATH CURSE OF TARTU

ColorScope

STARRING
Fred PINERO

Babette SHERRILL

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED
BY WILLIAM GREFE

PRODUCED
BY JOSEPH FINK & JUAN HIDALGO-GATO

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STING OF DEATH

ColorScope

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DIRECTED BY
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Feast your eyes on these five incredible new releases from the Prince of Pulpitude himself!

SPACE THING

1968, COLOR - Visit the "planet of the rapes" with Captain Mother and her sultry crew of sadistic lesbians in this campy "peek into the year 2069." Comes in a full-color box created by Dave "Rocketeer" Stevens!

A Sweet Sickness

1965, BW - Pretty young Dae from somewhere, USA shows up in Hollywood and learns what it takes to become a star. "A moving visual experience" or "Eight reels of sewage?" You be the judge of this nudie-ruffie about the underground film business in LA.

THE NOTORIOUS DAUGHTER OF BANNY HOLL

1966, COLOR - The incredibly sexy Stacey Walker stars as "Kissy Hill", the teenage Hoyden offspring. Tutored in the art of lovemaking, she was able to play hanky-panky with the best of them. (The Duchess of Roxbury and the Count de Sade among them!)

PERVERTENTLY FILMED IN EXPLICIT COLOR

Brand/Shame

1968, COLOR - It's the adult color Western that puts you back in the saddle again! Molly and her stable of prostitutes take on the good and bad guys alike! It's like the kiss of a red-hot branding iron! See Dave Friedman himself at the reins of a stodgecoach.

ADULTS ONLY

BRAND SHAME

IN COLOR!!

A RIBALD DELIGHT!

TRADER HORNEE

Here it is! Dave's big-budget nudie-laff-riot epic! An African Alice in wonderland! "The film that breaks the law of the jungle" takes you on a quest into the darkest Africa in search of Algona, the White Goddess. It's definitely "A three-ring circus for the broad-minded"

Moonlighting Wives

1964, COLOR - "Expose" of a prostitution racket run by a ruthless housewife in the New York suburbs. Directed by Joe Sarno.

Career Bed

1969, BW - A sleazy stage mother pushes her incredibly sexy daughter up the ladder of success. Don't miss this one. Directed by Joel Reed.

Henry's Nite In

1968, BW - Henry's psychotherapist recommends extramarital sex to cure his potency problems. Then he learns how to become invisible. Incredible invisible sex ensues.

Hot Thrills and Warm Chills

1966, BW - "Wild madness that will make your innards sizzle!" Four hot babes, former street gang chums, attempt to pull off a major crime in Rio during Mardi Gras. Starring Rita Alexander and featuring Russ Meyer star Lorna Maitland. Sleazy-listening Mambo music by Perez Prado. Directed by Dale Berry.

Aroused

1966, BW - Here's a real sickie! Killer of prostitutes gets it in the end. Directed by Anton Holden.

Sinderella and the Golden Bra

1964, COLOR - Musical comedy variation of the popular Cinderella story with the major difference involving bust, instead of foot size.

The Weird World of LSD

1967, BW - Whoever made this one must have been using large amounts of the then popular hallucinogen. So wild and over the top, we can't recommend it enough!

Naughty Dallas

1964, COLOR - Larry "Mars Needs Women" Buchanan's first movie! Young, naive country gal goes to the big city to become a stripper. This tease classic was shot in Jack Ruby's Dallas strip club two months before the JFK assassination.

Female Animal

1970, COLOR - Angelique, via flashbacks, recounts the events leading up to her present position (flat on her back). Director Juan Grinella.

Fly Now, Pay Later

1969, BW - Definitely of the nudie-ruffie-sickle category, this story of drug smuggling stewardesses does not contain one plane! However they did manage to include snakes, torture and various other important sleaze elements to keep our interest.

Sock It To Me Baby

1968, BW - Uncle's got the hots for his niece. But Auntie has been getting it on with her for years. A fine 60's portrayal of pent-up sexual frustration. Directed by Lou Campa.

To Turn A Trick

1967, BW - A twisted photographer takes in a wanna-be model and shows her the tricks of the trade. Features drug abuse, lesbianism and degenerate lifestyles in 60's NYC. Produced by Sam Lake.

Private Relations

1968, BW - PR man Earl Dudley has his hands full in this sleazy film filled with cheesy sets, naked gals and plenty of mistakes and bloopers left intact in order to save film. Produced by Lou Campa.

Sex Freedom In Germany

1969, COLOR - A wacky mondo-keyhole look at 60's sexual practices in Germany including nude musicians, a sex political party, porno movie production, and a not-to-be-missed shocking art performance by Otto Muml.

We All Go Down

1969, BW - Directed by Gerard "Deep Throat" Damiano, this excellent example of gritty 60's NYCB&W sleaze has it all: drugs, boobs, orgies and terrible acting. Don't miss it.

The Girl Grabbers

1968, COLOR - Girl-hungry hoodlums on the loose in NYC! A true "nudie-ruffie."

The Hot Pearl Snatch

1965, COLOR - A true tease and sleaze mess! Nude pearl divers, strippers, voodoo curse, entirely senseless yet titillating. From the same director who brought you "The Naked Complex"

The HOT pearl SNATCH

COLOR ADULTS ONLY

Paris Ooh-La-La!

1963, COLOR - An American businessman goes on a 24-hour sex spree in Paris, ending up in the Crazy Horse Saloon where he gets more than an eye-full! A "laff riot" in the true nudie-cutie tradition.

A Woman In Love

1969, BW - A guy loses his marbles and tries seducing his friend's wife. When that doesn't work, he rapes his fiancée who he thinks is his step-sister! A truly strange nudie film.

18... And Ready

1968, BW - Sleazy film director and his lesbian part agent wife lure young girls into a seething web of perverted thrills.

Hot-Blooded Woman

1965, BW - Young nymphomaniac can't resist exhibiting herself. She finally gets raped, sent to a nut house, etc. Directed by Dale Berry.

Hot-Blooded Woman

...STARRING BEVERLY OLIVER DRUG PAPERS

Naughty New Orleans

1962, COLOR - Striptease bump-and-grind in the French Quarter.

The Devil's Joint

1969, BW - Here's a true Something Weird find. A documentary on marijuana scare films of the 20s and 30s. It's a howl. Narrator is obviously pro-pot. The film was probably financed by wacked-out hippie drug dealers. A must-see!

The Commuter Game

1969, BW - Two suburban husbands rent an apartment in the city to use as a love pad. When their wives catch on they join in on the fun and games. Directed by Fred Kamell.

That Tender Touch

1969, COLOR - Another fine nudie tease flick. Directed by Russell Vincent.

The Spy Who Came

1969, BW - A lesbian blackmailer makes incriminating movies of a police detective with a prostitute a week before his wedding. Another ruffie.

One Shocking Moment

1965, BW - Director Ted V. Mikels' "lost" nudie tease film has bisexuality, sadomachism, orgies and ... marriage. A rare discovery!

The Ultimate Voyeur

1969, BW - A man pays people to do weird things while he looks on. A real sickie.

Ann and Eve

1969, COLOR - An 18 year-old girl meets a lesbian nightclub singer. They run off together only to have a shattering experience involving seduction and rape.

Rio Nudo

1969, COLOR - A voyeuristic view of Rio De Janeiro's red light district. "Orgies, prostitutes and exotic dancers in a frenzy of drinking, dancing and sensual abandon!"

The Games Men Play

1963, BW - A prostitute becomes ill with Bubonic Plague in a seedy hotel filled with sexually frustrated guests. Director Daniel Tinayre.

The Minx

1970, COLOR - Big-time shady business dealings, adulterous affairs and good old hanky-panky make this the ultimate blend of sex and violence.

Kitten In A Cage

1968, BW - A strange sex melodrama involving a girl on the run, jewel thieves and lesbian topless dancers.

Brazen Women of Balzac

1969, COLOR - West Germany is responsible for this good-looking soft-core film involving the mistaken identity theme mistresses, orgies and big bazooms galore!

Country Girl

1967, COLOR - She uses a whiskey bottle in the wildest way imaginable! This film is "a Cadillac in the adult market."

Dracula, The Dirty Old Man

1968, COLOR - The ultimate nudie horror comedy!

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